First Journey

john van garderen

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FIRST JOURNEY'S

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Introduction

The first 25 years of my life from boyhood to manhood has been a journey through the rites of a passage that all young men pass through to adulthood. This is my journey.

I have told my story as I remember, I am now in my mid-forties. I have tried to return to the thoughts and dreams I had when I set out on my journey. The grammar and spelling used is intentional in most parts of this book, reflect my language of the day.

I have written this book for my children, mostly for their amusement, and for my own entertainment. I have enjoyed retracing my first journeys and have gained some insight into why I am who I have become. I had commenced many paths of these journeys not knowing what I wanted or where I would it would end. The sheer belief in the invincibility of youth

"I'm OK, nothing will happen to me!"

naively got me through to adulthood. I thank the consistent providence of my Creator.

* * *

To Emily and Robert

Part One

Tasmania

87Clara Street West Ulverstone

As far as I can remember, 87 Clara Street was the first house I can ever recall living in. We lived in a few other houses in West Ulverstone prior to Clara Street, but these were rented houses and only live as early stories listened to after tea when dad would story on about our first years in Tassie.

Clara Street was a home that was always under some kind of renovation, It had bits that could have been properly finished off even when it was sold 16 years later.

The earliest event I remember is the old brick fireplace being taken out of the kitchen. I helped carrying the bricks in a small wooden trolley from the back door along the concrete path to stack them alongside the laundry shed.

The kitchen was a small crowded room with a large fireplace come cooker, with a tiny room off it that was Hanneke's bedroom. It was at the back of the house, and like a large lean-to coming off the back of the main part of the house. It had a sloping ceiling with a noisy tin roof. The back door opened into the kitchen and there was a window that looked over the backyard, over the fence and onto the Bass Straight. In the centre of the kitchen was a large table that was always covered by a Dutch mat, vases and ashtrays. Mum always sat at one end and Dirk at the other for meals, (he was cack-handed and needed the space.)

After the old fireplace was removed, the wall that divided the little room off the kitchen (Hanneke's bedroom) was removed, there was room for a couple of old Dutch oak armchairs and an old cast iron wood fire was installed. It was the type that had a door at the front to put the wood in, that needed a handle to open it, and that was always lost in the wood box next to it. On the top, you could put a kettle and in the winter it always had damp clothes hanging in front of it.

As a small boy, most of my time was spent in the kitchen, playing In front of the cast iron fireplace, listening to the radio, and sitting on the old red armchairs. We used to squeeze our hands down the

back of the cushion part of the chair and find treasures like, old combs; marbles even the odd penny.
The floor had the old cold lino where you could see the lines of the floorboards through. The kitchen later got a new sink, stove and a large window so that you could see the Bass Strait without climbing up onto the sink. The fridges came and went. First, there was an icebox that Dad made. You had to put a block of ice into the bottom of it, (it was made by filling a bucket half full of water and getting it frozen somewhere.) The big thrill with the icebox is that we could make ice cream. Well, we tried, with powders and milk, to make ice cream of sorts. The icebox finally moved out into the backyard, and in came the Norge. It was a real electric fridge with a large handle that needed a good strong pull to open it. Well, the handle broke and for years it served us with a rebuilt solid steel handle. Cory's friends used to laugh when they saw the fridge as Norge was slang for a nice pair of boobs!
The only other thing of interest in the kitchen was a large cupboard that served as the pantry. It held everything, biscuits and lollies upon the too-high shelves and at times firework crackers right on the top of it. Down on the lower shelves were all the boring things that you couldn't eat.
The colour of the kitchen walls was all different at one time, I'm not sure if it was fashion, or that the secondhand panels that Dad used to put up were already painted. Also at one time all the cupboard doors and drawer fronts were each painted a different colour. (This could also be due to leftover paint from jobs elsewhere.)
The other end of the kitchen had a door that led into the bathroom/ toilet. This was the room that was also the storage room. The bath was a large cast iron bath with lion's feet. Later Dad put sides around it to make it look more modern, even installing a shower on top of it. The hot water cylinder was built into a cupboard, this cupboard acted as the drying cupboard for towels and the butter lived in there too. The toilet was next to the bath, and this caused much screaming through the

door to hurry up.
The bathroom had its highlight on Saturday nights when the whole lot of us would go in one after the other for a weekly wash. I used to hate it. Mum washed our hair by grabbing us by the scruff of our neck, dunking us under the water, then up for a quick breather while she rubbed the soap in, back underwater while the soap was rinsed out. I'm sure the last stage took so long at times that I must have been on the verge of drowning. Up out of the water, we come screaming dookie.. dookie.. to wipe the soap out of our eyes. Still, we only had to suffer once a week. It was the shower that changed our bathing habits to twice a week. Even Clara Street went through modernity.
There was a small window above the bath that had to be kept open while you had a shower to let all the steam out. I remember later, Dirk's girlfriend Gonny coming around for tea and having a shower at our place. Dirk told me not to go outside to look at Gonny's boobs through the window. I was so embarrassed, to think
That I would even think of doing that! I wonder if Dirk did?
The other purpose of the bathroom was to banish naughty boys to. I remember many diner times being ended with me sitting on the toilet with a plate of some horrid food on my knees, having been told that I was not allowed to come out until I had finished the plate. It never occurred to me to flush it down the toilet! Food was something that you ate and you ate all served on your plate, no matter what it tasted like.
The other problem with the toilet was that it was at the opposite end of the house to the bedrooms. This meant that you had to walk through the lounge room to get to it from te bedrooms. A real problem when you wanted to go to the toilet after being sent to bed. If there were visitors, we weren't allowed into the lounge room.
So the toilet was a place too far...
I can't remember pots under the bed,
or many wet sheets, so I must have had some success sneaking behind the couch to get through the lounge room!
For many years, as a small boy the dinner table in the kitchen was the centre of my universe. Day time Mum

would have covered with ironing or preparing meals on it. Odd cup of coffee with other Dutch ladies that would visit in the mornings.
Most mornings they would come up from down the hill, Auntie's, Dutch friends etc. I would be sent outside to play, but before I went outside I would try my best to get a biscuit that would be somewhere on top of the table. There was a Koffie Molen fixed to the wall near the back door. This was a coffee grinder with a small box-shaped glass cup that slid into the bottom of it. You could grind coffee beans in it and the ground coffee would fall into the glass cup. It was rarely used, as we didn't have a coffee percolator that worked. Instant coffee was the potion used. Milk was mixed with water and left to boil on the stove. More often than not, we would hear screams and pandemonium as Mum or someone would rush to the stove to lift the pot as the milk boiled over. Mum used to knit at the table and later in the evenings, read books seated at the table. The older brothers used to do their homework after tea on the table, not that that happened often. Homework didn't seem a priority at our place.
The highlight of the day was the family meal at the table. In the winter the kitchen would be steamy from the boiling pots on the stove with the veggies and potatoes. The table was set with a tablecloth, pots placed in the middle of the table, all seated around the table with deep bowl-type plates, Mum would serve up the food from the pots with big spoons.
Dad would open in prayer, then we would eat ravishingly, usually without speaking, finish quickly, and then Dad would start. He usually read something from the Bible. I can remember many attempts at reading the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but I don't think we ever got through. When I was small the readings, prayer and all conversations were in Dutch. The local church services were all in Dutch and I didn't really speak English until I went to school.
When dad was in the mood he would story on after the bible reading. The sign that a good story was about to happen, was the folding of the part of

the table cloth that hung over the edge of the table back onto the tabletop. He would then smooth the folded table cloth with his hands in a majestic sweep, fold his hands and out would come stories of before the war.... or my mother used to.... Uncle is such and such.... It was always entertaining, with humorous moments, some sad. I remember he used to read a lively Dutch book about Oom Bram. A mischievous uncle who lived in the horse and cart days.

Dad's storytelling was well known. He used to have the knack of adding bits that never made you sure what was fact or fiction. Arne Compagne seemed to have taken an interest in Hanneke who was a close friend to his sister Betsy. Betsy was a nurse. Arne used to find his way to our dinner table and used to prompt Dad to tell his war stories. I think it was a way to come into the house to court my sister.

We nearly always had a cat of some sort. 1 remember one silly cat that used to sleep in front of the cast iron fire on a mat? It slept so soundly that once we smelt burning fur while having dinner at the table. The silly thing was fast asleep with its fur being scorched. The cats all had the same name grijsie (grey-ie). We had dogs too, but they didn't come inside.

One cat had kittens in the laundry shed one Saturday night. That Sunday we went off to church only to come back to find Lee French a boy in the neighbourhood, throwing them against the concrete floor. His dad used to get rid of kittens that way, he thought he was doing us a favour. It probably was too. Lee's mum always said Lee was a bit of a rummin. Mum stood on one of the kittens with her high heels once, the poor thing screamed, Mum screamed, Mum kept on screaming, and the kitten didn't. Dad teased her for a while after that.

Mice used to live under the floorboards occasionally. They used to get into the pantry cupboard. That wasn't too hard as it had gaps in the back of it. I remember one time, mouse droppings were mixed in with the chocolate splinters that we called mousies, putting a bit of tang

into the Sunday breakfast. Sunday breakfast was always Bischuitjes (Rusks) with mousies sprinkled on them.
The other big event that seemed clear of the early days was the kitchen table again, full of plates of cakes and biscuits. I could see over the top of the table and it seemed an endless supply of nice things to eat. It was the day Mum came home with my baby sister Janet. There was a lot of fuss. Hanneke had baked most of the things and people were hovering around mum and baby Janet. The other four of us were born at home. It was customary for all the family and neighbours to visit the new baby and Mum a few days after the birth. So around they all came.
Later, I remember Mum with her big boobs feeding Janet. She used to use a round glass thing to help with her nipple. I was fascinated by the maternal
goings on. The laundry shed now had buckets with nappies soaking in them, and Mum was always busy.
The laundry was a smelly shed down a path from the back door. It had an old concrete dual-wash tub. In it and next to the draining pit lived the Pope. This was a wringer washing machine. It had a big lever on the side of it that you pushed to make the agitator work. All the clothes were put through the wringer at the top with the aid of Mum's washing stick that she called the stockie. The wringer was made up of two rubber rollers that squeezed the water out of the clothes as they were rolled between them. The water would pour out of the bottom of the wringer back into the washing machine, I used to watch this, fascinated at all the mechanics involved.
The stockie also came in handy for her to smack the boys with. The most fearful sight would be Mum at the back door yelling, "Come here" with the stockie in her hand. The funny thing was that we also walked up for our punishment and ran through the back door as fast as we could to get to the sanctuary of the bedroom.
Outside the back door, there were three concrete

steps about a metre wide and in all about a metre high. This was my launching pad for my planes, racetrack for my cars and workbench for all those things I made. I also used to sit on the steps with my head resting on my hands and whining to mum, wondering when I would be allowed to go to school. The step, for years, was the place for thoughts and contemplations.

The house was built in the late 1800's. Ulverstone, being a town of woodcutters and sawmills meant that most of the early cottages were built out of wood. Our place was a fine example of an early hand-built wooden house. We didn't see it that way, we thought of it as the oldest place in the neighbourhood. The neighbours saw it as the place where the Dutchies lived.

It was a square shape with a lean-to kitchen, and bathroom on the back. The foundations were about 2 feet high and it was made up of many large stones piled up on each other without any mortar holding them together. Under the house, these stone foundation walls went crisscrossing holding up each of the inside walls. There was a hole in the foundation, just under the bathroom window that you could crawl into and get under the floors. I can only remember going into that hole once, and not too far, it was a dark spooky place where the cats went and the mice lived. I used to look into the darkness through the hole, and wonder what happened under the floorboards.

The outside walls were covered in handmade weatherboards, that were either different thicknesses, and uneven in the way they were nailed on. In some places new weatherboards had been nailed in, these looked out of place with their machined perfection. Later in my teenage years, I got to know these weatherboards well, when we painted the house. The best colour I can remember was a bright daffodil yellow with a bright green roof, hey it was the late 60's and the colour was in...

The windows were that heavy wooden style where there were two window frames in each window that slid up and down. As you slid them, you could hear the counterweights clang against the inside wall.

Eventually, these old windows were replaced by modern wooden ones that Dad bought from renovated houses. Janet's ' bedroom always had the old one and the clanging of the counterweights could clearly be heard throughout the house whenever any one slid the windows. No chance of sneaking out of the window from that room.
When we shifted in the inside walls were made up of split planks. These were made by splitting a tree into palings about one and a half metres long 15 centre metres wide and about one centimetre thick. They were rough and splintery. Nailed to this was a hessian cloth, (like potato bags) and pasted onto that was wallpaper. As the years went by, wallpaper was pasted over wallpaper and it became a hard surface.
The ceilings were high. 10-foot ceilings we used to call them. They were made out of planks nailed closely together. There was a huge open fireplace in the main front bedroom that backed onto the fireplace in the lounge room. Both these fireplaces joined into one chimney. I can remember Dad always being concerned about the red brick chimney whenever we had a good westerly storm. He was sure it would fall through the roof one stormy night. So as a small boy, I used to go to sleep looking up at the ceiling, whenever it was a stormy night. Never did fall in...
As the years went by, the inside walls were replaced with Burnie board and painted. This was the local hardboard made at Burnie. All the old split wall palings found their way into the fireplace. Janet's bedroom seemed to be the one that was left original, with the old brown wallpaper, that had a the small repetitive pattern on it. If you stared at it crossed-eyed enough; you could see all sorts of pictures in it, horses, people's faces, and other things you see just before you fall asleep. I used to move into Janet's room whenever we got a border, usually, a single Dutch guy would come for a few weeks and stay for six months.
The lounge room was the most interesting place in the house and in the early days I only seemed to go in there on Sundays. We had a number of old

pedal organs over a period of time and Dad used to peddle away on it and play hymns. He used to read a strange style of music that you read vertically up and down the page. As Dad could not play from memory, he could only play music in this format, so all his hymn books were in the Klaviskribo and limited his repertoire to these hymns only. Still, there was always music in the lounge room on Sundays, either from Dad's homemade record player or he would play the hymns we sang in Church over again.

The walls in this lounge room had a slow transformation to Burnie board. One time, it was decided to paint the walls. They were still the old wallpaper over hessian then, To get a thick wall look, Dad pasted heaps of newspapers over the existing wallpaper and when it finally dried, painted it all light blue...

The fireplaces were taken out, inside walls were moved about, and a large iron window was put in the inside wall between the kitchen and the lounge. We were the only house to have one of those..

Installing larger windows seems to have been one of Dad's favourite past times, as most rooms eventually got larger windows, and then larger ones again. It all had to do with what bargain came along.

The roof was a dangerous place, and only to be conquered when it was desperate to get a tennis ball out of the spouting. Except for the lean-to part, the rest of the house had a very steep roof. It was made out of short lengths of corrugated roofing iron, that was slippery and a real challenge to get to the spouting that had the ball in it. Cory once slid off the roof getting a ball, grabbed the spouting as he slid off the roof, hung there for a while then jumped onto the ground. He was the brave one..

The laundry shed was also Dad's workshop, had a workbench in it and was full of sawdust and tools.

For a while, there was a dunny out in the back yard, that a man(Tony van Roiyen) used to visit from the council and take away the big tin bucket that sat under the wooden toilet seat. There was a little door in the back of the dunny that the tin went in and out of. People used to say that he couldn't

smell that's why the council gave him the job. He used to carry the can on his shoulders. I think the council; decided to stop this service soon after we moved in and in went the septic tank. We affectionately knew him as the shit can man..

We had chooks and a makeshift chook house in the far corner of the yard. The back and side fences were also very old. They were made out of split palings and the posts were large hand-split posts with the railings split out of logs and mortice and tenoned into the posts. The whole fence would have been made out of trees delivered to the yard and men splitting them up with axes. The wood was so old that it was Grey, and the tops of the posts were weathered and spiky.

The clothesline was made up of two tall posts about the length of a cricket pitch apart, with a crosspiece at each end so that looked like the cross of Jesus. Wires ran from each side of the crosspiece.

Whenever the clothesline was full of clothes, the middle of the line was propped up with a pole to hold the line high in the air. You'll still see these clotheslines in some country places.

For a long time, the backyard was a large veggie garden with rows of veggies either going to seed or patches of weeds with some well-attended rows between them. It was too large for the time Dad had to put into it. There were too few lawns at the front of the house that were kept short with the hand mower.

There were only two bushes on the property, one was a red berry tree and the other a white rose bush that had grown into a large wild looking thing that held up the fence. It used to flower with small white roses that had a lovely scent.

There was a huge Norfolk pine tree out to the front of the house that towered well above the house. When we shifted in the neighbours advised Dad to cut it down or it would fall down on us. He-did, the stump of it was over a metre wide and finally rotted away.

The only time we used to front door was to get in the milk, or hastily receive a summons from the police. Usually for being late in paying the light bill

as the electricity bill was called.
The milk was delivered each morning into a billy that was placed outside the front door. In those days the milkman would take large 5-gallon cans in his ute and at each house pour out the milk into billies with a ladle that would hold a pint.
The house surely was a home. In many ways, it was a family home. In my younger days, I can't remember Tasmanian people coming over for dinner, or inviting neighbourhood kids for tea. I suppose the spoken Dutch at the table didn't seem too inviting to Tassie friends, and the strange way we ate our spuds with sju. I think Dad enjoyed the simplicity of the house and doing his modifications to it. I don't think he renovated it to modernise it, I just think he enjoyed doing bits to it as bargains popped up.

The Neighbourhood

Clara Street is a very long street. It goes from the sea south to the river, about 2 miles long. It's the last true street of West Ulverstone, and for many years had houses well spaced apart on one side and farmland on the other. We lived on the southern end of the street, on a small hill, close to the South Road. The South road was the country road to farms and a back road to the next town Penguin.

Our place was the second along the South Road. On the corner of South Road and Clara Street lived the Morgan's who had a large block. There was a lot of garden between their house and our property. They had a son called Kevin who was a couple of years older than me and he was not allowed to play with the other boys in the neighbourhood. His family was well into trotting horses, we always thought they were very rich. Every Sunday Mr and Mrs Morgan used to do their gardening and burn the trimmings and things in their backyard, which was right next to our place. Many Sundays we would be having our hot midday meal with the windows shut, trying to keep the smoke out. Many times coming home from church, we would say as loud as possible, "*Ah! The Morgans are stinking again*", didn't seem to make much difference though.

The other side of our property bordered a vacant block of land that we always thought was too small to build a house on. It usually had a horse in it, a cow called Betsy from Mr. Cowgill who once lived there for a while, but most of the time it was empty. We saw it as part of our extended playground. It had a great plum tree at the back of it.

The back fence, backed onto a very large paddock of about 2 acres. This was Mr.Allen's, sometimes it was ploughed and crops grown in it, most of the time there were sheep in it. Mum used to throw the potato peels over the back fence, she used to say she was feeding the sheep, but Mr. Allen didn't always see it that way. Early on he had lots of chooks and we used to get our eggs from him.

Across the road from us, in the early days were

two paddocks that both had a tiny shack on each of them, not much more than 2 metres by 3 metres. Mrs Williams lived in one, and an old man supposedly in the other. Their yard was just like a paddock and the only way you knew if she was home was by seeing smoke come out of the chimney. I didn't go over to see them, they scared me. Never did see the old man?
There was one Christmas Eve when it was very wet and stormy, Dad was playing carols on the pedal organ, we were singing them and Mrs. Williams came over to ask for a match. She stayed for a while while we were singing around the organ. I can't remember the old man in the other shack. We did have a good rummage through his house after he died. It was a smelly place, in a great mess, with heaps of old newspapers and bottles. He must have found consolation in a bottle. The Collins built a big house on Mrs Williams's land and put horses on the old man's block next door.
Directly across the road from us the Ackers lived, he was the manager of the Coles Store. My older brothers used to play with their kids, Ivor was the oldest. I wasn't allowed to play with them as I was too small. They moved out and the Jones moved in. He used to sell cars and sometimes came home in a new Holden. I remember being well impressed with the new 1963 Holden. It had backlight the shape of TV's. They had 2 sons Christopher and Gregory. We were either good friends or great enemies.
My oldest friend lived on the corner of the South Road and Clara Street, opposite the Morgan's. He was Lee French. They had a house that was built high and from our place, you could see their sunroom. Mrs French spent most of her time in the sunroom. You could see all the way down Clara Street to the sea from the French's sunroom.
Lee had older brothers Dale and Morris. Morris was always away at Uni, and Dale lived in Dubbo, in NSW. His sister Ruth lived at home with Lee. Ruth played the piano and was very shy.
Mr French got his knee shot full of shrapnel in the war with the Japs. He used to drink quite a bit. They said he drank to get over the bad times in the

war. He used to work seasonal jobs picking up potatoes, gathering peas onto trucks for the viners, and baling. He used to come home tired and sleep on the old couch in the sunroom while Mrs. French made him steak and eggs.

Mrs French was originally from a big farm out the back of Penguin. We went there once; she showed us these huge pine trees, that she could remember her mum planting up the driveway.

Mrs French always seemed to be baking Anzac biscuits or cooking meals. I used to spend a lot of time at Lee's place. They had a case of apples at the door, I was always allowed to have one. She also always wore an apron. Around 10 every morning she would walk across the road to Mrs Morgan for a cuppa.

Lee and I used to go to the same schools, but we didn't spend much time together at school. It was Lee who I first started speaking English.

The French were very good to me, they weren't wealthy at all, and Mrs French had a hard time looking after Mr. French.

The French's had a car. It was a Zephyr. Mr French didn't use it much, but Mrs French sometimes drove Lee and me to Devonport to the pool. That was a real treat. I broke my tooth trying to dive into the pool at the shallow end. I didn't get that broken tooth fixed until I was 38. Once I took my snorkel and goggles to the pool and looked at everyone under the water.

Just past the French's place up the South road hill, across the road was the red telephone box. It was definitely out of bounds to the boys. An old lady who lived in the house where the telephone box was, used to come out screaming at us if we were ever caught in the phone box. Next door to her house was the long driveway to the old people's home. There was a grate at the front of the driveway that would fill with water, and used to have heaps of tadpoles in it. We used to catch them and put them in glass jars.

Clara Street crossed the South road and for many years stopped just short of going down a steep hill to the river road.

The river was our greatest playground. It had a tee tree bush, bull rush swamp, and flat shrub covered island in the river estuary. The river was very tidal, and at low tide, it was all mud flats. A bit further along the river road that ran alongside the river had a lot of gum trees with Kookaburra's and then the town tip with a huge sawdust dump behind it.

From our place on Clara Street, you could walk across the road, get into a paddock and walk for miles over many paddocks. My brothers used to set rabbit traps in the paddocks to catch rabbits as they ran out of their burrows. I used to go with them in the mornings to check the traps, we caught a lot of rabbits that way.

We had ferrets too. They would be used to chase the rabbits out of the burrows and we would set nets over the burrow entrances and catch the frightened rabbits as they ran out of the burrows.

Outside School Hours

The school wasn't everything in our neighbourhood. Winter times kept us indoors, but the rest of the year were busy times.

In the Spring, the larger properties around our area, fruit trees would be full of pears, nectarines, peaches and apricots. After tea, we would get together and try to raid the fruit trees by climbing over the back fences. We didn't see it as stealing, more of a game to get a piece of fruit without being caught. I didn't get over the fences much and used to wait behind the fences quietly, for the yell and scream as the people chased the boys away from their fruit trees. Once Chris Jones lost his shoe getting away in a hurry. Mr Jones blamed us for his sons' mischief. He gave Dad a piece of his mind and Chris wasn't allowed to play with us for a long time.

Saturdays, we either went for walks into the farm areas or bush or if we had money, went to the pictures. The Saturday afternoon matinee was a treat. The old picture theatre on the main street was an event. It costs 9 pence to get in and I would get a shilling, which was 3 pence spending money. You could get 4 aniseed ball lollies for a penny, or one big Gob Stopper.

The usherette who ran the theatre was a dragon. She knew us and didn't like us. She had a bright torch and used to shine it at us if we made a noise in the seats. The matinee would start with God Save the Queen. We all had to stand up. Once I didn't stand up and the dragon sent me out without seeing a thing. If we were lucky, we could sneak upstairs and sit above. All the goodie goodies were allowed to sit there as the dragon only stayed downstairs. If we got up there, we would throw aniseed balls at the Queen. It would make a big whack, as they hit the screen.

If it was a boring film, we would crawl under the seats all over the theatre and try to catch each other. I got sent out for that many times too. But, if it was a good film with cowboys and Indians, we would stamp our feet as hard as we could on the wooden floor during the chases, and yell out when

the goodies came to save the day.
On the way home from the picture theatre, especially in winter, we would go through the sawmill near the river. They used to kiln-dry the wood and have a big furnace to produce the heat. Lee had a relative who would keep the furnace going in the weekends and we would sit with him, looking into the furnace as he threw wood into the hot burning coals.
The sawn planks were stacked in rows about a metre wide and three metres high. We would climb on these and run and jump from the top of one to the other or put planks across them and play tight ropewalkers. We were all daredevils, especially after the pictures.
West Ulverstone had a great beach and better still there were islands off the beach that was accessible at low tide and completely surrounded by the sea at high tide. These Islands would be ours for the time the tide was high. We would build forts on them, fish off them and in the summer swim and jump off the island cliffs into the sea. One island, Goat Island was a beauty, It had trees on it, a cave you could walk through, a huge deep rock pool like a swimming pool, a high steep hill and a quarry that once had a railway to it. It was bout six miles from home, so a good walk to get there, but a great place. The other island nearby was Seagull Island. This had a stormwater pipe going out to it, that you could walk along at low tide. In season there were hundreds of seagulls nesting on it and we would go looking for chicks and eggs. Didn't disturb them, just liked to find them. This was the island with a high cliff on it that, if you were a hero, you could jump off it into the sea below. There were lots of rock pools on this island with shells and sea enemies that we called bloodsuckers. You could also find small blue-ringed octopus and little fish in these pools.
The beach has white fine sand and lots of holidaymakers come there in caravans in the summer. To stay in the camp that ran the whole length of the beach.
There was a small creek that ran into the sea about

two-thirds of the way down the beach towards the mouth of the Leven River. You could free camp on the council land in this area. Yep, all the Dutchies we knew, would come down in tents in the summer, free camp and use the showers and toilet in the main campground. One time we started with a 12-by 12 ft square tent, and by the end of our holidays we had to get Mr Hey's truck to get all the stuff home. Every few days more would come down from our house. We had the kitchen table and chairs, mattresses, and the lot.

It was good fun with all the other Dutchies. When we couldn't get into the campground toilets, we would go to the Dutchies who lived near the beach. We even had milk and bread delivered by the local Dutch milkman and baker.

The Leven River was another thing altogether. At the river mouth, there were two breakwalls that go out to sea on each side of the river. About two miles upriver from the mouth is the wharf. This used to be a busy port when Ulverstone was a timber town, a trader the King Islander (WillWatch, sank in 1968), used to call in to take freight. A few fishing boats worked out of Ulverstone. These were small wooden boats that would catch gummy sharks and couta. The wharf was the local swimming spot after school for the high school kids. To be a hero, you had to jump off the car bridge and swim downriver to the wharf about 300 yards away. It was great fun as the current would carry you down to the wharf, you just had to be quick to grab the ladder at the wharf or you would drift way past the wharf and have to walk a long way to get back to it.

Cory was a real hero. He used to dive off the car bridge. Once he did so and frightened the daylights out of a load of people in a motor boat as they saw Cory dive straight in front of the boat and comes up behind them. Another trick was to jump close to the rowing teams as they came under the bridge rowing. They didn't like that much.

A bit further up the river was the railway bridge. We used to jump off that too. The big dare was to jump off it as a train was coming; this was to scare the train driver.

The Dutch community decided to put on a Sinter Klaas event on the wharf one year. This was a grand affair. Hundreds of people crowded the wharf area, and Old Sinta Klaas and his black helpers (Later, I was told that Dad was one of them!), berthed at the wharf, disembarked from their long boat (one of the eight-man rowing skulls from the rowing club upriver) and majestically walked down the carpet to be welcomed by the Dutch representatives. His Black helpers, (Black Piets) moved through the crowd with sacks on their backs looking for bad children to take back to the Spice Islands. They would throw crumbly small biscuits at the kids and we all promised them that we would continue to be good. Seemed to work at the next day in church, I didn't notice any of my friends missing.

The Ulverstone showgrounds backed onto the river. There were lots of cattle sheds there and horse stables that were only used for the trotting meetings and the show week. These were good for hide and seek on the way home from the picture too. I once saw a pony being born in the stables when the circus was in town. It came out in a big clear bag, and the mare licked it clean. I hadn't seen anything large being born before. That same circus had elephants that would help to put up their big tents. I think it was called the Bullins Circus.

The show was a major event of its own. The Army would put on a display with rifles and equipment. During the Vietnam War, they displayed all the booby traps and bent nail grenades that the Viet Cong used. I didn't like these homemade weapons, I suppose it was easy to understand what harm they could do as they were made out of things that we understood.

You could also sit in the new cars on display and find the one with the highest mph speedo, even get onto the tractors.

The show was a time to makemoney, either collecting cordial bottles or leading
animals around the show ring. I didn't lead animals, but Cory and Dirk did. Of course, sneaking in without paying was par for the course.

The cheap food was over at the CWA food stalls where they had their crafts and cakes etc. Also toffee apples.
The side show alley, took most of our money, up on the Ferris wheel or into a dodgem car or try to shoot the ducks to win a prize. It was two shillings a go for years. We sneaked into the strip tease tent one year we saw the lady strip down to her bikini bottom and held up a card with a very long word on it to cover her boobs. Earlier that day, Cory and Dirk said she was down at the river for a swim, dived into the water, and her bikini top came off. All the boys politely clapped.
You could also get doughnuts from a caravan that had a continuous tape playing,
" Hot American doughnuts, they're hot,
they're American,
and they're delicious"
The Ferris wheel and Gee Whiz would go for as long as the hit music played. The most popular hit I can remember is the Beatles, *"She's got a ticket to ride"*.
Upriver from Ulverstone, the Leven river widened into a large estuary, with the Gawler River running into it. There were reeds growing on both sides of the river, islands that you could see from the top of Clara Street, and sandbanks that would only be covered for a short period of time at a high tide. The bird life varied from cranes to small mud hoppers.
Past the estuary, the river narrowed and became deep. There was one place we called shag rock. We could get there by boat. Dirk once rowed me to this rock in a dinghy with our cousin Dries Dykstra. Other times I got there in his canvas kayak with Cory in his. You could walk to this place from the South road through the bush. A few hundred yards up the hill from this rock was a shack with a water tank. We used to boil a billy there and make a cuppa.
I once caught an eel off Shag Rock. The water below this rock was black and there didn't seem to be a bottom. At this stage, the Leven had native bush on both sides and going upriver, went on

past Lobster Creek, Green Flats, on past the Dial Range further inland to Gunns Plains up to Ben Lomond. I walked in these areas with Dirk and Cory looking for minerals, chasing snakes, following the old railway line. Once, nearer to Ulverstone in a tee tree forest, we built a fort out of Tee trees, a sort of platform about 2 metres square about two metres off the ground. This Tee tree forest was below some limestone cliff. Ringtail opossums lived in the tee trees. We would search them out, shake the trees they were in and keep our mouths shut. They would piss in your face as you shook the trees.
The other recreation the Leven River provided was fishing. I used to go down in the summer evenings after Dad came home from work, with Dad to fish off the break wall behind the showgrounds. We would use little salted fish for bait, that we bought from Eric Close the grocer, cast out into the river and wait for the Cocky Salmon, Red Cod, Flatheads and Mullet to bite. Got quite a few fish down there.
Just down Clara Street from our place, on the paddock side, is a very steep hill. On the top of this hill was an old concrete lookout. You could see miles out to sea and along the North West Coast to the Tamar River heads. This hill in the summer was the site for fast-speed grass sledges. We used to take pieces of hardboard, pull up the front and zoom down the hill at great speed. Cory was a champion at this, and at one time having completed a fast run, picked up his piece of hardboard and rotated it above his head yelling, "Whirlybirds" after a TV helicopter show. I walked up to him and bang, got hit in the forehead. They took me to the hospital, where I had stitches put in to keep my Forehead together.
From the lookout at the top of the hill, you could walk west a couple of miles and come to the Mecca of kids' entertainment. The Barn. This was a huge hay barn with a large corrugated iron roof. The roof was held up by poles the size of power poles. The barn was usually half full of hay bales. We would find planks of wood and stack the bales so that the barn was riddled with forts connected by

tunnels. It was like building a series of underground rooms with giant Lego. We would play in these chambers in the hay; at one time we took candles for light. Never caused a fire, I don't know why not! The other trick was to find some rope, tie it to the rafters in the roof and swing from a stack of bales to land in some soft hay made by breaking up some bales. We used to hide in our forts when the farmer arrived. He would at times stand above us and yell," I know you're in here you little bastards!" We kept quiet and eventually, he went away. We were pretty good at hiding the entrances to our forts. Next door to the barn was the old abandoned farmhouse. It was full of ghosts and lots of pigeon shit. Didn't go in there much. Behind the Barn down in the valley, was a dam. This dam had bushes on one side that the native hens (a bright blue little fowl) would run into whenever we ran down the hill to it. The water was deep green and we thought there were dead sheep thrown into the dam. Still, we swam in it on hot days.

Also from our neighbourhood, there was a small hill in the Clara Street road going down to the flat sea plain. This hill was about 30 feet high and had a reasonably steep slope, ideal for billy carts. We made heaps of them, out of scavenged bits of wood and pram wheels found down at the tip. We would nail them together on a Saturday morning, race down the street hill and crash them at the bottom. Eventually, they would fall apart and we would carry the wreckage back home, and throw it beside the laundry shed until the next time we were inspired to build billy carts.

Collecting beer bottles was a good means of making money. We would get the billy cartwheels, nail them under a wooden potato box, and nail a handle to the box so it looked something like a wooden pram. Then go about the streets calling into houses and asking for empty beer bottles. We would get 3 pence a dozen from the blind man over the river. (He also bought our rabbit skins in the early days). We would build our billy cart for the journey to the blind man, after collecting for weeks, then fill our billy cart to the brim with empty beer bottles, then spend most of the day getting over to the blind man

to sell them. One time we did all this, and he was shut when we got there. We just left the lot there, billy cart and all went home and forgot about it.
Wintertime was also a time to make money. Selling programmes for the footy matches. We would turn up early at the football ground get a quota of programmes and go down to the pubs in the town to sell them. Sometimes they would pay with a two-shilling piece instead of one, we could Make a bit of money some days. Another trick was to stand in front of a man drinking a soft drink at the canteen and ask for his bottle when he finished. If he gave it to
us, we would wait a while and then bring it back to the canteen and get the refund on the bottle. Only problem with this was that at the canteen they would buy a bottle of cordial, "drink here" that meant a return on the bottle was not paid for. The owner of the canteen couldn't keep up with who bought what half the time. It was easy pickings.
When we did watch a bit of the footy game. There was a big pine tree hedge behind the goalposts, that we would climb into and if you were really lucky you could catch the ball as it went through the goalposts and throw it back to the umpires! Big bad boys from East Ulverstone usually occupied this spot in the hedge, so it was very competitive to stay up on the hedge.
Bonfire Night was the event of the year in our neighbourhood. Next door to our place we built a huge bonfire out of trees that we would cut down next to the river and drag up the hill to make a steep pyramid-shaped bonfire. This could take weeks to build and all the kids in the neighbourhood would be involved in making it, usually under the engineering directions of Dirk and Cory. Janet and I would crawl through the trees to make a fort in the centre of the bonfire and she would play with her dolls and tea set in there. Crackers and skyrockets could be bought at Coles. There were penny and threepenny bombers that were really big crackers. The three-penny bangers could blow off your fingers. We would light them, wait until the wick was nearly all burnt, and then throw the cracker

high in the air. There would be a huge explosion above our heads. The other trick was to light one and put a jam tin over it. When it exploded the tin would go up to sixty feet in the air. Throw them in drainpipes and they would sound like canons. We once got into trouble with the police as boys from another neighbourhood were blowing up people's letter boxes with the three-penny bangers that would burn the letters inside. The victims were sure it was us, but this crime was not ours. Sky rockets and whizzy things were pretty expensive and the few we had, we saved for the night. The whole neighbourhood would come to the bonfire, we would put Guy's on the bonfire made up of old clothes stuffed with old newspaper. The thing would be lit and off would go the fireworks. We had a song,

"Build a bonfire, build a bonfire,
put the teachers on the top,
put the prefects in the middle,
and burn the bloody lot!"

When the bonfire burnt down to wood coals, we would throw in potatoes, let them cook for a while, then take the blackened potatoes out, break them open and eat the cooked centre with teaspoons.

It was fun times most of the time. We were free to do what we wanted to do and go where we liked on Saturdays, there was only one restriction when I was small, Cory and Dirk had to take me with them, and later, I had to take Janet with me. Mum seemed happier when we were together, out of the house. Dad had this thing where the brothers had to take the small brother with them. This was from his early days, being the second youngest of 16; he was left out of most things. Great for me, I got to go to places all over the countryside with my two big brothers, only it was bad form to complain. I remember being dead tired on a walk back from looking for minerals in the Dial Range, crying my eyes out, as I was too tired to walk. Dirk and Cory both took turns kicking my backside to move me on, I could be stubborn too!

Church

The Reformed Church of Ulverstone is one of the earliest Reformed Churches in Australia.
It was started in the early 1950s, by Dutch who wanted to worship in the Reformed faith that they were accustomed to in the Netherlands.
The Reformed church was also a contributor to the Immigration scheme that ran in the 50's and 60's. This scheme worked on a sponsorship system, where prospective immigrants needed accommodation and a job, before they were given permission to settle in Australia.
Australia was usually the third choice for the Dutch immigrant. First being Canada, then New Zealand.
Australia, under the sponsorship scheme, it allowed families to settle in Australia, while the other two countries preferred single unmarried immigrants, who would assimilate into society quickly?
Mum and Dad and us four kids were satisfied with the scheme and were sponsored by the Reformed Church of Ulverstone. My Uncle had already settled in Ulverstone and wrote glowing reports on the virtues of living in Tasmania. Dad was ready for a new start, and adventure and saw immigration as a way of escaping the fears of the European Cold War.
We arrived in Ulverstone after 6 weeks of travel on a ship to Melbourne, then a plane flight to Tasmania.
I was just a bit over one year old, it was 18 Aug 1956.
My earliest recollection of the Ulverstone Reformed Church brings back the smell of brilcream and sore feet. We were always smartly dressed for church and
hair combed with a dash of brilcream out of the glass jar. We would walk to church from Clara Street. This was about 3 miles and took about 40 minutes. The Church was on the other side of the river near the high school. We would cross the road bridge, walk past the Queen's garden, past the Anglican church and across the road from the Catholic church to our little wooden church. The church building was more like a hall built on a normal residential block of land. It did have a steep roof, and a small porch in front of it. On either side of

the porch were two black lights like old gas lamps. Inside the church, there were two rows of benches, with an aisle between them that led to the small stage that had a wooden pulpit in the centre of it, with a baptismal font to the right of it. The pulpit had a carving on the front of it, with a picture of Jesus, with "Hear Him" carved in Psalter hymn lettering. The organ was a pedal type that was on the left of the stage. It's back faced the congregation and behind it was a bench for the organist to sit on when the sermon was preached. (used to sit on this bench with Dad when he played the organ.) The windows in the church were those boring bubble types, that you couldn't see through. The ceiling was made of soft board tiles, the type with lots of holes drilled into it for ventilation. The challenge was to count how many holes there were in the ceiling.

The interior lights were like a steering wheel of an old car suspended horizontally from the ceiling with lights the shape of candles mounted around it. Behind the church was a consistory room where the elders met and a small kitchen and toilet. It was taboo to go to the toilet during church on your own, and caused much embarrassment if mum or big brother had to take you during the service as you had to walk in front of everyone to get through the door to the toilet. If you got there, you would stay in the kitchen till the service ended. There were about 35 families attending church in the early 60's. All Dutch, although the services were in English, in the early days, it seems to me that church was a place where only Dutch was spoken, as all conversations and instructions from our parents were in Dutch. A Dutch service was held every month. The minister was Rev. van der Staal. He also lived on South Road and drove a little Ford Anglia. It had teeth for a front grill.

At the end of the service, you walked past the Reverend shook his hand, stared at his shoes and said, "Dominee"

The families usually sat in the same pews week after week and at times it was most unfortunate if visitors sat in someone else's pew. Most people

would look at them and they would get the feeling they would have to find another pew quickly. The worst pew to sit in was the back one to the left of the entrance door. This is where the Weeda family sat. Mrs. Weeda was most protective of her seat. I once saw her come in late and squeeze onto the already full pew with her husband with a most indignant expression on her face!

Singing was always very loud and hearty. Most of the people in the

congregation were reasonably sized families that would have come out from Holland that way, they worked at trades or shift work in the factories. There were also small businessmen, such as bakers, and milk vendors, the Compagnes had a shop, but most were from working-class backgrounds in Holland and held the Church, Dominee and Elders with great respect. The Church was the centre of our social life and where we met to catch up on the week's events and find people to go to for coffee after church. The service was much the same format as Reformed churches today, we used the same Psalter Hymnal although an earlier version and ate peppermints or minties just before the sermon. Collections were taken in black cloth bags with wooden handles. We would drop a few pennies into it and it would sound like lots of coins were put in. The elders sat on two short pews one on each side of the stage. They would lean forward then back, cross and uncross their legs, and even yawn. If you Were lucky you would see one sneak a peppermint into his mouth.

There were lots of kids about our families' age and these were the main friends we had until we left home.

We didn't have Sunday school, but Bible Class. This was held on Saturday mornings at the West Ulverstone School. The same school I went to during the week. This did not impress the west Ulverstone kids at all. Especially when the football team would walk past the classroom and pull faces at us as we were in class. We had to learn the verses of hymns from memory and were tested on them the next week.

If you misbehaved you were sent out of the room and told to sit in the corridor. This had its benefits in that you see the football game through the window. Mum and Dad weren't too strict in sending me, and I missed out on a lot of Saturdays. That was until Arne Compagne became a teacher with Hanneke his bride-to-be. I couldn't get out of it then. Saw a lot of footy that year...

The church was also very supportive to its congregation and tried to help the Immigrants settle and find their way through the maze of Australian lifestyle. The other side is that we were branded the Dutchies from the Dutch Reformed Church that sticks together. That was true too as people from the church usually married people from the church. Arne and Hanneke were the early generation to fit this pattern, later, many of my friends did the same.

Dad was quite content to share the church organist job with Mr. van Ek the bricklayer. Mr. van Ek had a great appreciation of music, art and literature. He was the closest we had to an intellectual. Dad didn't become a church elder or involved in the affairs of the church except for working bees. There was a certain amount of superiority shown by the elders, that at times they may have overstepped the mark of humility expected from them. But, it was early days in the church and human flaws showed. There were families who didn't talk to each other for some time and kept their distance from each other. My uncle, other auntie and cousins fell into this bracket and rarely went to church.

The church was also the place to display your new clothes, also the proud moments when a family had reached a financial stage to buy a car. Another was to sit next to your partner when you wanted to make it obvious that you were both serious.

Dad had his moment too, when he bought our first car, the Austin A40, a gem!

After church, we would all pile out onto the small concrete patch in front of the church, grown-ups would speak loudly to make themselves heard as they all tried to hold their place on the concrete.

The kids would run around chasing each other, glad of the freedom from sitting still all that time in church.

One time the neighbour to the church remarked, " *They must have a good time in there, they sing as if there are hundreds in there at the end, the kids come out charging and screaming all over the place, while the parents laugh and talk as loud as they can and didn't leave for some time."*

The church gave stability to us Dutchies and certainly provided a spiritual home for those who still felt so far from home. Home was that place you came from but were unable to get back to. I saw this in my dad when the black-bordered letters would arrive from Holland announcing the death of one of his family.

We had church picnics at the West Ulverstone beach, dad slipped a disk in his back at one of these picnics playing soccer. It was quite an event when a lot of Dutch families met for a social occasion, lots of food, lots of preparation, lots of kids, and always waving of hands and some angry adult reprimanding their kids

As a boy, I had one of the greatest privileges as a child could have, and didn't think it was out of the ordinary. I had loving parents, a Christian home, and was taught to trust the Lord.

At night, I would be put to bed and mum would listen to me recite the Dutch children's prayer. I saw Dad pray when he was happy at the dinner table, I also saw him weep in prayer.

We saw and were taught that life has many faces, happy and sad, and through these times, you come in front of the Lord in prayer.

Sunday was church day, a day to dress up, walk to church as a family, worship from the family pew, and be with other familiar Dutch people.

School

You had to have your 6 th birthday before June to start at school, that year.
This was Mum's dilemma, and mine too! I had had enough of sitting on the back step asking Mum at every opportunity when could I go to school. This problem was easily solved, Mum just told the school that my birthday was 9th May instead of My true date, 9th July. So start of 1961, off to school I went with Cory.
West Ulverstone Primary School was a relatively new school built down the hill in the flat area below our place. It was about a mile away and on the edge of a very large Housing Commission estate. We used to call these houses, bank homes. The people who lived in them were mostly people who worked in shift work in factories, labourers and men without trades. It was a pretty tough area. There were only about four different styles of houses and a number of them were the type with a common wall between them some had yards that looked like building sites. A few of the older people had nice flower gardens and kept an eye out for the dogs that would choose the cleanest yard to defecate in, much to the amusement of the hardier people living around them.
The school had a kindergarten and went from grade / to grade 6. The Kindergarten was a separate building, (Oom Renis built it) with an entranceway that you could do woodwork in, a locker room, that had open lockers to hang your coat in. You learnt to know which was your locker by the small picture that was stuck on it. It also had a kitchen and a piano. My kindergarten teacher was Mrs Hazelwood. She was a pleasant patient lady who in the first year taught me to read Dick and Jane and that talking out of turn meant sitting for a long time in my locker. You could just fit into it sitting on your bottom with your feet sticking out across the floor. On good days we would go outside on the concrete with painting easels and paint pictures. The big boys were allowed to play with large wooden blocks that were about one foot by two feet cubes. They would make castles and forts. I

joined in once and some blocks fell on me. I was banned from the wooden cubes after that. Mrs Hazelwood said I was too small to carry them. Lee French was a big boy and was always allowed to play with them.

I painted a lot of pictures. Once I made an Easter Egg out of a real chook egg that the teacher blew all the insides out through a pinhole. Then we painted it and put it in a matchbox carriage.

Mrs Hazelwood could play the piano and we would sing. I enjoyed singing. Kindergarten would finish earlier than the rest of the school and we would wait for the big kids to come out, and go home with them.

Grades one and two went quickly. I wanted to be a crate monitor. This job was for the big boys, who could carry the metal milk crates into the classroom in the morning and we all had to drink a small bottle of milk. Sometimes the sun would have shined on it for a few hours and it was warm and sickly. Lee French didn't have to drink the milk. His mum gave him a note to say that milk gave him eczema. He was one of the few that got out of it. Once a month the Red Cross goitre tablet tin came out of the cupboard and we all had to take a small white pill to keep our goitres healthy. It worked, I think I've still got mine ever it is. The playground at the back of the classrooms was for different-sized kids. There were small swings and low monkey bars also a low-hanging thing like a ladder that you swung from rung to rung. We used to race out at recess and climb on top of this thing and stop the girls from swinging along under it. The big kids weren't allowed in our section of the playground. Their monkey bars were higher and they had a tall maypole. The one time the whole playground combined was when marble season was on. This was serious stuff,. You took your marbles to school in a small cloth bag and at lunchtime and recess, you would play bunny hole or ringie. The big kids played for keeps. That meant if you lost, you lost your marbles, while us little kids played just for fun. No tears when it was for fun, you came home with the marbles you left home with. The big kids

allowed the little ones to come over and cheer on the champions as they won all the marbles.. There were some real heroes in the marbles; Cory wasn't too bad at winning either. A lot of the Marble games would end in a scrap and a few times I saw Cory go up to the headmaster Mr. Maclaine for the cuts. That's what we would call the cane. He was tough on Immigrant kids and Cory did not make it easy for the next Van Garderen to follow on up the classes after him. Once Cory got the cane for not standing still during assembly.

Behind the playground on a rise, was the football oval with four goalposts at each end. It was Aussie Rules football. We also had an outdoor netball court where the girls played. Boys weren't allowed on that court.

Grade 3,4,5,6 classrooms were in another block to 1 & 2. When I went to grade 3 Cory had moved on to High School. I had a hard grade 3. Had a young Dutch female teacher (Miss van Bethlehem) who was very tough on me and had me put in her bad books before I got a chance. So I would play up and get introduced to the cane that Cory had known so well. I had two years in grade 3, to make up for my young age. A lot of the time I was sent outside to sit in the corridor for misbehaving.

There was a school shop across the road from the school entrance. The Gaffney's owned the shop and in the winter they would make chips that you would order in the morning and collect at lunchtime. It was 9 pence a bag with sauce. This shop had a huge lolly counter with glass in front of it that you would bend down; shout through and poor Mrs Gaffney would try to pick the lollies you were pointing to. For threepence, you could get 6 lollies of a halfpenny each. She must have had a lot of patience to get all the threepences from the kids. A bottle of Coke was sixpence, drink here. I rarely bought that expensive luxury!

The Gaffney's went on a three-month trip on the Mainland to Darwin. When they came back, they had a slide show for the entire grade three. They travelled in a Kombi van and there was a slide of the Kombi van getting a lift on a big truck through

the desert. There were also slides of black aborigines. I had never seen a black man in real life.
I didn't go to grade 4 as they could see I was bored with not having a challenge in schoolwork, so I went straight to Grade 5. The next two years were the best years at school. My teacher was a beautiful young lady called Miss Reece. She had the same name as the Premier of Tasmania. She was a natural teacher and a person you wanted to be good for. If the class were good, later in the day she would read a chapter of the storybook. She would take us to sing at the piano in the Kindergarten in the afternoon after Kindergarten was out. Mr. Neil would come in to give science lessons. When I did play up, Miss Reece would send me to Mr. Neil's room (he took grade 4) and make me stand on a chair in front of the whole class facing the blackboard and tell the class kids how silly I had been. They would laugh and I would have to stand there till the end of the lesson. I can only remember having to do that once. We used to make guns out of matchboxes and a clothes peg with a rubber band and flick pieces of broken matchsticks at each other while Miss Reece read the story out of the book. Well, one time I shot at Chris Jones and the piece of the match went straight up in the air and landed on Miss Reece's book. Off to Mr. Neil I went. I deserved it..
Our Minister, Dominee van der Staal used to come to our school around Anzac Day. We would raise the flag in the quadrangle, sing "O God our help in ages past" and he would give us all an apple as we filed past him and his huge apple box.
Once the yo-yo champions came and gave the school an exhibition on yo-yos. The two young men were dressed in white suits and had Coca-Cola hats on. They were really good and Mr. Gaffney sold nice fibreglass Coca-Cola yo-yo's for two shillings and sixpence. We all saved up for one of those beauties.
During grade five the Australian government decided to change our currency to decimal.
There was a song on the radio to the tune of "click go the shears" that told us that it was going to

change on the 16 of February 1966.
This meant that most of grade 5 maths was learning to convert sterling to decimal currency. So one pound 13 shillings and threepence was to become $3.32 It was great, no need to change it all into pennies to do currency divisions.
There was a real problem at the Gaffney's shop at the time of conversion. A penny would convert to a cent but a three-penny piece would only convert to a two-cent piece. So, to still get three big gobstoppers for a threepence, we would ask for single pennies in our change and go and get the value that way. Soon the pennies ran out of circulation and we all felt cheated by the new money. I remember an old lady saying to a shopkeeper that she was shifting to the Mainland as they still had the old money over there.
Grade 6 was the big one. I was one of the big kids now, Janet had just started at Kindergarten and Miss Reece was now Mrs Fromberg.
I enjoyed that year, didn't get the cane, tried to do my best at subjects and sat at the front of the class. Mum even came to school on an open day when parents were allowed to come in and see the kids workbooks. It was the first time she came on a parent visit morning. It was also during a roll call on my birthday that Mrs Fromberg asked if it really was my birthday, as the school register said it was 9th May. Then she said in a matter-of-fact voice, "Oh well, your mum must have sneaked you into school" Boy, did I get embarrassed.
Behind the football oval was a swamp. The school originally was built on a swamp that they had drained. This swamp had lots of little islands in it covered with bulrushes. One lunchtime I saw some of the tough kids go over there, so I followed. When I found them they were really cross. They had a stash of smokes and were swapping stolen comic books. I turned 11 in grade 6 and didn't think kids would dare to do that. I didn't go near those boys again. Not that they would welcome me either. Thinking back, Miss Reece had a lot to do with getting me back onto the track to seeing school as fun and wanting to do better. God's providence was

there too.

Friends, Relatives and Others

There certainly was a great variety of people that I associated with my early days.

Dad was always the soft touch and target for stray Dutch single men, looking for a place to board.

Bill DuMey was the earliest boarder I can remember. I think he came to work with Dad's building gang and needed a place to stay, we were to put him up for 6 weeks until he found his way. He stayed for six months. He used to eat a lot and broke the plastic toilet seat.

It is probably because of him, that I still don't use the plastic seat, just perch on the porcelain!

The other boarder was a more interesting fellow. How he came to our place, I'm not sure.

Joseph van Horrick was a farmer's son, a tall big Man, who used to throw his head back and come out with a hearty laugh. He didn't like to wash, and always had huge weeping pimples on the back of his neck.

He was a catholic, didn't go out with any of the local Dutch girls (Mum sure tried to find him a partner to move him on from home) and had a great love of nature. I used to go for walks in the bush with him and we set snares for rabbits. He had an unnerving habit of being able to sit on the couch and contently stare out the window for an hour without moving. During the time he stayed with us, he had a variety of jobs and the local Dutch life insurance man, Pim Sneiders called in to visit him occasionally. Later he got a job at a local furniture factory and moved out to rent a house in the country. He used to drop in to see us to ask Mum how to cook spuds or what meat to use or get a torn shirt sewn. He met a girl, Virginia, a Methodist minister's daughter, on his trip out to Tasmania when the ship called at Tonga. A couple of years later, when living in the country house, he decided he needed a wife, went back to Tonga, found his Tongan Virginia and they still live in a house not far from the one he rented. While living at our place, Joseph bought a Morris

Minor van. It only had a drivers' seat and a wooden

potato box with a sack on it for the passenger seat. Mum would send Joseph out to practice his driving whenever she could. It must have driven her mad to have him sitting on the couch contently staring out the window all afternoon. I used to sit on the potato box, wear a hat, so people would think he had a licensed driver next to him. Unfortunately for Joseph chose me to help improve his English.
I would sit at the kitchen table and he would try to write down what I said, I would correct it. It was the blind leading the blind.
One of the most helpful Tasmanians we knew was Mr. Eric Close. He owned a small general store. In those days the general store owner would call around at your place on a set morning each week, take the pencil from behind his ear and write down in his order book the groceries that you required. He would deliver them the next day. As not many people had cars, he did quite well. He used to get on quite well with Mum. With her broken English and a lot of Dutch thrown in, Mr, Close would somehow get the order completed. He was exceptionally good at
letting the account get overdue, and I'm sure the only reason we ate when Dad was off work, was through his generosity. Mr Close was also a keen fisherman down at Leven River behind the show grounds. He believed in the fish bait he sold.
Mr. Ap van Zelm, lived down in the bank home area near the school. Mum and Mrs van Zelm were great friends and used to have coffee together in the mornings. I used to play with Robbie their son, and after school for some time, helped to clean up his dad's workshop at his Golden Fleece service station. Several times, Ap would drive out somewhere to tow one of Dad's cars back. Dad didn't have the knack of choosing a reliable car from Von Bibra Motors. He seemed to attract the lemons and Ap became good at towing them away.
I had several relatives also living in Ulverstone. Soon after we arrived in Tassie, Dad's sister, Rijke Dykstra, husband and family arrived. They lived in a big old house down near the river just off the south road. Oom Dries, used to drive a

tram in Holland. He was a huge man, spoke slowly and seemed very kind. He worked in a nearby cake bakery, Fawdrey's. We used to get off cuts from cakes at their place. He had a huge veggie garden and used to put seaweed on it. He died after a short time in Tassie. It was sad. My auntie became very tough, and shifted into the bank home area down the road from us on Clara Street, and I used to play with the cousins, Frank and Toosje, but was too scared to go into their house. Tante Rijke could get very cross. She was a short dumpy lady. Used to lift one cheek of her backside to fart. Then stare at us sternly and say. "Doctor said I have to let it out!" She also made a pocket in the front of the inside of her skirt. She would sit at the kitchen table, flick up her skirt, take her smokes out of her pocket and light up a fag as if all people carried their smokes there.

Over the back fence from her, lived her oldest son, Henk. He and Tante Willie, came out from Holland with them as a young married couple. Henk was an electrician. They had made a style to get over the fence. One day Tante Rijke fell off the style while getting over the fence. She sat in her house like the queen, bossing everybody about with her leg resting on a chair. Dad and I visited her, made her a cup of coffee and I think he was pleased to go home shortly afterwards.

Next door to Henk and Willie lived the Aaltink's. They were always old. Mr. Aaltink, had a goat that would only understand English. He used to demonstrate his best English to other visiting Dutch people by speaking to the goat. Poor man, he had a terrible case of the stutters, and it must have been very hard to keep a straight face at his proud display. They ate the goat for Christmas dinner.

Mr Aaltikc played the violin. The only time he would play it was when he felt inspired. I only heard him once on a Sunday when he came to our place for a coffee. Dad on the peddle organ, Mr. Aaltinc with the violin, and Mrs Aalintic who was almost blind, smiling with an expression of pure ecstasy at the music, that really sounded like a whining dog scratching a cat. Everyone in the Dutch community

grew veggies and traded them with each other. This was a touchy barter system. I remember Mr Aaltinc making his position loud and clear at times, even if it did take a long time for him to get his words out.

A bit further down the Clara Street from Tante Rijke lives her eldest daughter, Joopie and Fons Draaijers. They also came out to Tassie as newlyweds. We didn't see a lot of them. He was a very quiet man. She was very clean and tidy and didn't like kids in the house.

The Dykstra clan didn't go to church and although pleasant enough people, would not like to speak about Christian things when we went around for coffees.

The other Uncle, Om Rinus and Tante Toos, were the rich family connection that lived over the river in a big house and he at one time had a large building contractors business with over 40 people employed by him. He was a great egotist and used to enjoy showing his younger brother, my dad, how successful, cunning and wise he was in business. Dad and I used to go fishing with him off the rocks at Goat Island. Later he bought an 18 ft cabin cruiser and we went out to sea with him fishing off the coast of Ulverstone. He would anchor the boat, and soon enough, dad and I would throw up and then we would start catching fish. Oom Rinus loved to argue and would get quite heated if he was losing. One time after church they were having coffee at our place and started talking about the boat trip out to Tasmania. After going through the Suez Canal the ship pulled in at Pt. Said. Was it on the left bank or the right bank? This turned into a fierce argument. Dad eventually opened the school atlas to prove his point. This would not deter Oom Rinus, he sharply retorted, "*The map is wrong!*". If we went to visit them after church, Janet and I would not be allowed in the kitchen for some reason. She would give us a cup of cordial and if her grandchildren were there, they would get lemonade. I can remember Mum and Dad coming home very upset from visiting them, many times. Oom Rinus could be a very spiteful man. It didn't

occur to me then but I think he couldn't take it, that although he had great success in business and times of wealth, he didn't have what Dad and Mum had, the family life, the love for each other and contentment to do the best with what you have. Years later Oom Rinus died a very pitiful, sad, angry man.

The kids I knocked around with at school lived in various parts of West Ulverstone. I would go around to their homes and play with whoever was the favourite. These are some of the characters.

Bill Shelton lived down the road from the school and lived in an old house that had large lawns and flower gardens. His dad had a senior job at the council and his grandpa lived with them. Bill's parents were quite old and inside their house, they had lots of old-fashioned things. In a large shed out the back were very old rifles and bayonets from grandpa's First World War days. Also old radios and gramophones. Bill was a master at fixing biros at school. If you had a biro that had a jammed ball, he would pull a good head off any empty refill and squeeze it onto the good refill with the bad ball. This usually caused a lot of ink to spill all over his desk. He didn't mind, just wiped the ink off with his sleeve. His desk was next to the window in grade five. One day the headmaster was taking the class and didn't appreciate the good Bill was doing for us by fixing the biros at class, he yelled at him and was about to grab him by the ears and take him off to be caned. Bill wasn't silly; he saw what was going to happen, jumped up on his desk, out the window and ran off, out the school gate, home.

Graham Pickford was a dentist's son and lived on the south road at the top of the first hill. He used to make lots of electrical circuits with bells, light switches, lights and batteries. I used to enjoy playing in his garage as he had lots of electrical things to play with. Even had a couple of old wooden telephones that we hooked up and would wind the handle to ring. His dad had the dentist surgery at their home and kids used to tell horrific stories of what went on there. I used to like playing with the things Graham had but kept a wide birth

of that dreaded surgery. Never did hear the screams that other kids used to say they heard walking past the Pickford's place.
Helen Baily lived across the road and in grade six, she used to think she was the queen of the school. She was the prettiest girl there and some boys used to kiss her down at the river after school. Lee French and I went to visit her one day after school to try our luck down at the river, Lee kissed her, but some big boys chased us away. Helen also used to say that she never had to put her name on any pencils, as all her pencils were HB.
Margaret Baker came from a poorer family in Mary Street. She loved horses and if there was a horse in a paddock anywhere near her place she would rush to it after school feed it grass and talk to it. She had big brown eyes like a horse and was down at the showground when a pony was born to a circus Shetland pony. She ran off to tell the circus people that the horse was ready to birth a foal. They didn't believe her, but it did about an hour later. I used to draw pictures of horses during art and give them to her.
Linda lived in Mary Street too. She used to come to school early and we would play corners, a game you played with five people in the entrance to the school block. The one in the middle would call out a name and the four people in the corners would have to change corners and the one in the middle tried to get a corner. We used to play this well before the rest of the kids would turn up. There was a grade six Red Cross Ball on soon and I was told that you had to take a girl along if you wanted to go. I asked Linda. I met her at the door of the hall that evening and told her her hair looked nice. She had it put up, she also wore a mohair jumper. I think we even danced. Most of the boys were rascals at the Ball, I can remember the Red Cross lady getting cross during her talk as the boys brought small water pistols with them and caused a lot of trouble. Also, they were scoffing at the food and drinks. Mrs French picked us up after the Ball and that was my first night out on a date.
Mark Serle also lived on Mary Street. His mum

and dad were tidy people and Mark had a train set. He was allowed to put it together in his lounge room and we used to play with it till I had to go home for teatime.
Jimmy Mullens came from a very large family that lived near the showgrounds. They had bedrooms built into the ceiling of their house. Jimmy and I used to play along the riverbanks and breakwalls nearer to the sea.
David Wight's father was the captain of the trading ship, "King Islander". I used to play with him with the hope of getting on board when it came to port. Never did. He was a big boy and could be mean at times.
Kees and Leveena Van Tatenhove. and Ricky Perko lived on Hearps Road. That was the last road off the south road just past the Ulverstone signpost. They went to our church and were allowed to go to school on the school bus. It was a small school bus and only kids who lived more than 2 miles from school were allowed to travel on it. Kees and Leveena were twins and were good friends for many years. At school though, we didn't get on too well. Whatever milk was left over in the crates after school, they would take home so their mum could make instant pudding or custard for that night' desert. I used to like to do the same too and if there wasn't much milk left, it was a bit of a competition. Also,I didn't like the big smiles they made at us from behind the school bus windows as we walked home in the rain!
I didn't have a special group of mates at school but moved along with different people as different things interested me. The neighbourhood provided the regular kids I would knock around with, but at school we had other friends, maybe, because we saw too much of each other at other times
When were all at home, family life was the the usual hectic pace is seen in families of seven, but there was a special life there. We had a loving mum and dad and at times lived through the trials of home life with its disciplines, moods, joys and sorrows.
The relatives were either getting along well with

us or there would be some family feud over some silly event that would keep them away for some time. It was Mum and Dad who seemed to be the forgiving side to make the peace whenever these tiffs happened. I suppose the relatives needed each other, faults and all.

There were many more school friends and characters about the town that had some influence in my early years.

I have written this story out of fun and have enjoyed going back 30 + years, being a boy of under 11 and explaining the world as it appeared to me at that age. A time when all events, places and people influenced who I was and what I did, and now, what I have become.

Spring 1996.

High School

What! Another van Garderen,
How many are there?
Yep! I made it to the big school!
I stood in the quadrangle facing the canteen and lined up with all the other new recruits. I was 11!
Now I wore a school uniform. Grey woollen trousers, blue shirt and striped school tie.
My jumper was tied around my waist, and being summer, the boys were allowed to roll their sleeves ир!
Names were called out and off we went to the classrooms on the left, E block. I went to E5, was given a locker and told to sit down quietly with the rest of the new kids. I looked out the window at the others still left in the quad, then across to the toilet block with a chimney puffing out grey smoke.
That first lunchtime, the toilet block was the place to avoid. The keen and the stupid were dragged into the boy's block and ceremoniously had their head dunked into the flushing toilet bowl. It was initiation day.
Somehow I missed out..
It didn't take long to get into the rut of high school life. I now had various teachers for different lessons and moved to different classrooms to attend lessons. I carried a big pile of books as we had 5 periods in the morning and 4 in the afternoon. The afternoon periods were usually doubles, Woodwork, metalwork, and dreaded PE. I was one of the smallest boys in the E year and when it came to PE, I was one of the last to be picked when the bigger boys were allowed to choose their teams. Also, we had a PE teacher who thought he was God's gift to the human race. (He also had a gutsfull of my older brothers who passed before.) Grant Stocks, bully extraordinaire.
I enjoyed the metalwork and woodwork classes and found math, science, and social studies easy.
I hated English and French was a curiosity. My music teacher was a stunner, young, blonde and actually a good teacher.
A boy's choir was started in the middle of the year. I was the lead soprano, At the end of the year, we

performed in the Ulverstone picture theatre (This was used as the town hall for special events, school book prize giving was a great event.) We sang " The Holy City" dressed in church choirboy outfits holding a lit candle and bible. I was the front of a triangle. We sang with all our might, with Keith Willie pounded the piano, and our beautiful teacher, dressed in a long gown, conducted us. (A touch of culture in the back bobs!)

School assembly was held once a week in the school hall. We marched into the hall in classes, boys on one side, girls on the other. Teachers were posted along the side of the rows of chairs and kept an eye on who moved unnecessarily or spoke. Certain detentions resulted if you were caught. The greatest evil a kid could do was chew on a Lollie during assembly. This was the height of insult.

We always sang a Hymn, recited the prayer and at times had to sing the school song;

" *We are young, and life is laughter for us,*
School we love, with skills and arts and honours,
Teach forever, to endeavour...
Alma mata Ulverstone High.."

Headmaster, Mr. McLain, deputy headmaster, Bull Cross, (he had a head like a Bull, a temper like a Bull, and could lash the cane with a snort like a Bull.) The prefects also sat on stage, like junior adults, stuffy and proper. Above the exit door were varnished Honour Role Boards dating back a long way. "1964 H van Garderen" My sister left her mark...

Not all the school could fit into the school hall as there were over 1000 of us, and the senior classes stayed in the classrooms and listened, supervised to the PA speaker in each room.

Progression from E5 went to D2 then C4 and finally B6.

The year in E class moved quickly and the newness of high school life soon became routine and times of boldness crept in. I had a small crowd to knock about with at lunchtimes, gave cheek to the seniors, (at a distance) and kept a good spot in the bike shed to hang my bike.

PE in winter became one of my favourite

lessons. If it rained we went into the school hall, with the girls and were taught ballroom dancing. This consisted of the progressive barn dance, waltz, and other various types of dances that had partner changes.
The boys were lined up at the opposite wall to the girls at the end of each dance. Then the boys moved across the room to choose the partner for the dance.
This went on throughout my high school years. In the E year choosing your partner was embarrassing, by the B year, it was competitive.
These dances were the standard dances we had at our end-of-year school social. Disco and free-style dancing was too radical for Ulverstone High, at any time. I did enjoy and learnt a number of dance steps and routines..
My year in D2 was a difficult year. I was trying to cope socially at school, and naïve to my peers. I lost interest in the school choir, as my favourite teacher had left, I didn't get into any sports teams and was not allowed by Dad to join the school Army or Navy cadets. My poor French teacher didn't last the year, she walked out of our class at the start of the last term of the year and that was it for French.
(We all agreed it was a good thing as who wants to go to France anyway!)
I had three English teachers that year, still hated the subject, but started to enjoy books in the library and spent a number of lunch times discovering the outside world through books.
(No TV at home, just radio and Dad homemade stereo with choice classical music. Cory bought a few LPs ' The Hollies, Jose Fleticiano; and Groovy Greats!)
I had a keen interest in electronics or rather radios and amplifiers, I used to find discarded radios at the tip and get them to work at home. Electronics was not keenly followed at school. The the library had few books on electronics and not many boys were interested in electronics.
I took on a news paper delivery round during my D year, 120 papers, started at 5:00 am every weekday morning.

So by the time school started at 8:45, I had already had a good part of the morning. Became a good little saver, and could rattle coins in my pocket at school.
(didn't spend them there though! I developed a tight attitude to money!)
Most of my friends felt the same about D year. We were called Silly D class Kids and acted to suit the name.
Scripture lessons were held once a week. The reformed church kids had to walk out of class and all meet together with the reformed church minister for a separate lesson. (This was the reformed church's idea.) It made us Dutch kids stick out like saw thumbs. We hated it.
The only foreign kids at the school were Dutch and some Yugoslavs. During my years, No Asians, Greek, Italian or coloured kids attended the school. So if racial lines were drawn, it was the Dutch bastards versus the rest. Belonging to a Dutch church made us look even more peculiar.
Looking back, it was a time of uncertainty, a time of finding social acceptance, a time of discovering social skills.
The friends I hung about with, were a mixed bunch. One guy was a keen ferreter and we walked over the hills behind the school on Saturdays pushing ferrets down burrows, setting nets to catch the terrified rabbits as they bolted out of the burrows.
The end of the school day in summer usually meant an hour down at the wharf for a swim in the Leven river. The car bridge is a few hundred yards upstream from the wharf. If the tide was high and going out, jumping off the bridge and being carried down river on the tide to the wharf was the big event. Jumping off the wharf at low tide was also fun, as it was about a 20-foot drop to the water.
The police used to come down to the wharf occasionally and tell us all to leave or tell us to get off the bridge.
Someone would yell out, "Cops" and we would jump into the river and swim to the other side, or just jump on our bikes and ride along the unused railway

line that once serviced the wharf to freedom.
One lunchtime I was involved in a pushing game at the entrance of our classrooms with some taller boys and girls. I must have said something about sex that showed how little I knew about the subject. I can remember the laughter and the girls giggling at me. I felt stupid and didn't know what I said. At that time I was still not sure if intercourse was needed to make babies. After all, I was more interested in radios and far way places across the world somewhere. An older boy took me aside and told me tactfully what I didn't know. Its true he said, my

dad told me! It was a good finish to the year, I stopped and started to think again.
The third year C4, it was 1969, people were growing their hair and we now had TV at home. Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, around mid-year exam time.
Friday nights, down to the street, Reiby Street, the main street in Ulverstone. Stand on the edge of the footpath and see who else is there. Watch the boys do the street, and drive their cars up and down the main street. Up to the town clock roundabout and back down to the bridge and do the circuit again, and again. I would meet up with some of the other boys, we were impressed! Then off to the Methodist church youth coffee shop. There was a live Christian band, cheap coffee, and a mirrored ball that rotated slowly from the ceiling reflecting dots of light all over the room.
It was a groovy place, with ashtrays on every table and it was cool to smoke. Even met up with some of the school girls and learnt to drink coffee. I enjoyed the live music.
I joined the hockey team and played interschool hockey on Saturdays in the winter. My favourite position was right back, defence. I had a go at rowing in school fours crew. I was number 3. We didn't get selected for the school regatta but it was a real joy to row up and down the Leven after school, with the Cox timing our stroke, shouting stroke, stroke.. stroke..
I became a surfie for a while. I put on a half wetsuit and charged out to the waves on my 8ft board. Well rubbed with wax, out to the deep I would paddle, wait for the right wave, then jump on top to take in the force of the 3-ft waves. Then splash, into the cold drink. I didn't get to control that board like Cory, but I could talk surf with the crowd at school.
Church life became better; I was in catechism on Tuesday nights after school and Cadets on Monday nights. We went on a few church cadet camps and were given a good bit of freedom being the bigger boys.
Fads used to start up a school. There was a grassed parade area near the netball courts. Over a

hundred kids would bunch up at one end of the parade ground, with about 20 of the big boys in the middle. Someone would shout British Bull Dogs, and we would tear across the parade ground to the other side. The bigger boys in the middle would try to catch you and throw you to the ground, then you would be in the middle too. This went on until no one was left to run. It ended in ripped shirts, grass-stained knees and the odd bloody nose, not to mention the bruises.

I still had my paper run in the mornings, but with a friend, I did week on week off. That meant I would only work every second week. I had a lawn-cutting round and worked for my cousin fixing washing machines on certain Saturdays.

The High school was divided into four houses. When you started at high school you were placed in the house that your family members had previously been in. It was a way to build family pride in your house. The houses were Bass, Tasman, Furneaux and Flinders. All good sailors. Our house was Furneaux, the greenhouse.

Once a year there would be the school athletics day at the local football ground, complete with grandstand. I would finish up in the novelty sports, unders and overs team race, three-legged race and tunnel ball.

End of the year we would go on buses inland about 20 miles to Sheffield, the closest Olympic-sized pool To Ulverstone. I did race and came close a few times. I used to like jumping off the high dive board.

PE in summer now meant a bus trip to the beach, to learn to swim campaigns. (This was a good hour of getting out of school, as most of us were already very proficient swimmers.)

Grant Stock was still as much of a prick as ever. I could take his bullying by now and had learnt to ignore him.

I started a technical drawing class. The teacher was Mr. K Watts. He was a remarkable teacher. A big, stern man who would tolerate no nonsense, and had a way with boys that commanded a deep respect. He would call our class; "my boys" and would part with us some of life's knowledge that his

father had taught him. He had a deep love for his father, and could pass that on to us. We all tried hard in his class. One of his father's sayings was; "*An once of common sense is worth a ton of brains!*"
I also had an English teacher that tried to teach English as an art. Mr. Ridout, a little Englishman who used to write English textbooks in England before coming out to Tasmania. He didn't have much time for the way English was taught in Tasmania. I wrote a science fiction story as an essay assignment, A week later, Mr. Ridout came back with the class essays. Placed them on his desk and said that he had received an essay that he had not seen for some time from a person in our class level. I thought oh yeah, which girl is it this time. He then held my essay, told the class it was riddled with spelling mistakes, read it to the class and then handed it to me. I was blown away, I had someone actually look past my spelling and grammar and try to read what I wanted to say.
Lunch times in the winter meant Aussie rules football To be selected for the schools team was for the elite! We used to get into two bunches of about 30 yards apart and kick footballs to each other. The idea was to jump up and mark the ball, then you could kick it back. If the big boys missed a mark, then the smaller boys would dart into the pack and pick out the ball. I had success at this sometimes. Kicking the ball used to play havoc with our shoes. The sole at the toes would break away from the uppers, leaving a frog's mouth at the front of your shoes.
Some days, on the way home from school, I would bike through the showgrounds to a rocky break wall on the riverside. Dad and I fished there a lot. When Dad was off work, we would fish together. We would catch Cocky Salmon and Flatheads on small fish we bought as bait from Eric. Close the grocer. At times the Cocky Salmon would be on a run. That meant schools of them would swim in and out of the river from the sea. This would bring lots of keen fishermen to the riverside break wall, and me peddling flat out after school to meet Dad.
My report for the first 3 years at high school all had a

similar theme from the different teachers except I enjoyed science and topped the year, I had topped the year in math the year before. I didn't enjoy homework and didn't put much time into studying, those I respected. " John can do much better if he puts some effort and work into this subject!"
The C class, year gave me a life. I was developing interests and felt more socially adequate, even sporty.
B6 was my home class for the last year of High school. It was in the sewing room and my class teacher was a member of our church.
Back in the second year of high school, we had to choose what career path we wanted to follow. Three choices, trades, commercial or academic. I chose trades, I was going to be a carpenter like my Dad! Trade meant making useful things like, egg flips and cookie stamps out of tin. The big one was a desk lamp made out of tin and a stool with a rotating round seat on top! Out of wood, we made a mallet, and garden stakes and the last year I made a stereogram and built the amplifier for it out of old radio bits. It was even shown on TV as school kids' woodwork projects at Ulverstone High.
There was a competition to design and build something out of custom wood. I made a tea trolley. I had to submit the price of materials and was over-cautious, priced it much too high. I could have got a prize but the cost of my trolley was uneconomical. (Silly thing is, I got the wood for free as offcuts!)
Cory left home for the love of his life while I was in the 4th year. He moved to Adelaide. Only Janet and I left at home by now. Janet was to start High School the year after I left. I had wanted to follow Cory in his school pursuits. (Cory left High School the year before I started.) He too, took the trade selections and came top of the school in Woodwork and Tech drawing. Eventually, I did too!
Towards the end of the school year, the idea of being a carpenter really didn't appeal anymore. I enjoyed Tech drawing and thought a career as a draughtsman might be a good idea. Electronics in my mind was a TV and Radio repairman. My brother-in-law, Arne was one of those, prospects of

getting that sort of job were very rare.
I didn't see, going to Devonport for Matriculation College for a couple of years to get a University entrance as a possibility. My brother Dirk went for a year, and then went to work in a bank, Cory also went to work in a bank straight after High School. I just wanted to get out and get a job, earn money. Mum and Dad encouraged that too! It was the mentality of a small-town upbringing.
I finished my paper round early in the year and spent a number of Saturdays working for my cousin in Devonport, re-skinning Hoover twin tub washing machines. What this meant was; new washing machines were transported by TNT transport. As they unloaded them off the truck some would fall off and get damaged. My job was to take the damaged skins off the washing machine and rebuild it again with a new skin. On a good Saturday, I could do three, I was getting, $6.00 per washing machine. Big money! Good saving.
During the mid-year school holidays, I worked with a painter from church. My job was to remove wallpaper and sandpaper, sandpaper. I hated it! My Mum's Father was a painter in Holland for many years. Mum used to say" *He enjoyed getting old buildings looking new again!*"
I became the B grade school hockey team captain and enjoyed that. It became un cool to ride your bike to school, so I walked the 2 miles, across the river each day. Jean walked with me a few. times, I had a romantic inclination too! She lived down in the bank home area of Josephine Street. She turned out to be a bit too keen for me.
We had a Japanese exchange student for a few months. I got on well with him and hung about with him at lunch times. He was a big boy and had heaps of electronic gadgets. A rare thing in those days.
That year a few of my friends were accepted into the Army or Navy officer school. They had a strange system where, at 16 you could go straight into officer school if you passed a written test. Most of the boys turned 16 mid 4th year. (I turned 15). It wasn't an option for me, but the Vietnam War was in full swing and fathers thought it best that sons were

officers with power instead of the 20-year-old conscripts! National service was compulsory at 20. A ballot selected you. The ballot was done on birthdays. Every year they would pull out 250 Birth dates out of a hat. If it was yours, you were in. Both Cory and Dirk were conscripted but didn't have to join. Dirk was doing religious study and Cory failed the medical, feet I think?
Also, a few girls quietly left school. Some of the boys used to use Glad Wrap as condoms!
The end-of-school social was held in the rowing club hall. It was a good night, lots of dancing, disco even later in the night. It was a collar and tie. I bought a brown vinyl jacket, and a tie. My weekends during the 4th year became busy, I was either working on washing machines, painting or involved in church activities. I didn't socialize with the day friends at school on the weekends.
I suppose this is why, when I left school, I didn't see much of them. My friends became the kids I grew up with from church.
High school days were not a time that I long to go back to. The struggle beinging the youngest in the class, and not on the favourite's list, didn't rank the place too high.
There were days of pranks and good laughs, once during metal work I cut the top joint in half of my index finger and had to have it stapled back on at Latrobe hospital.
The legal age to leave school was 16. I finished at 15 so I was made exempt. I thought it was a great way to end school, in a naive sort of way.
Yet, there were those high moments, times when work I had done was recognized, and friends were real friends, even the times, teachers turned to show that human face.
Life at school was real enough and challenges were not easy to overcome. Leaving, I felt prepared and ready to take on the world (or the North West Coast of Tassie) as a working man.

Get a job!

I was 15 and a half, exempted from high school, and the world was my oyster! I had good marks in technical drawing and a school certificate. I thought about being a draftsman, working for telecom as a technician, or maybe see if I could get a cadetship with a surveyor.

My job at the washing machine repair shop was now available as a full-time job, with the prospects of an apprenticeship. Also, the painter I worked part-time came over to ask me if I wanted a career in painting. So I guess I was lucky in that jobs were there.

Both these jobs meant either working for a family member or for a church painter. I wanted to be independent and get a career.

The Telecom entrance selection process put my age as too young. Local draughting offices weren't taking on juniors and the local surveyor didn't like the look of me. (I think he was after a packhorse or a mule or something to carry all his equipment.)

I applied for an electrical maintenance apprentice at a local British paint factory. My dad had worked There. (They gave preference to family members.)

I came up for one of the 3 that were selected, just had to pass a medical and I had it. I had to look at numbers and tracks in a book full of circles with coloured dots. Some of the numbers were easy to see, and tracks across the circle were easy to trace. Then a few came up, that didn't have any numbers or tracks, I thought these were trick ones.

The personnel officer called me the next day and nicely told me that I was colour-blind in red and green. This was critical for the electrician's work and just imagine if I had wired up the PowerPoint wrong, that they are going to plug their new computer into!

I was told that any career move in anything electrical would be a bad move. This did not go down with me at all. I knew the grass was green and that the local football team's colours were red and black! (Robins,home town Ulverstone) I then asked if they had work that could lead to a career.

(I had to be bold, couldn't take just any job.)

Cory and Helen were visiting home around this time. I remember Cory saying to me, "Don't follow your two older brothers and finish up in a bank" (Both Cory and Dirk worked in a bank as tellers, after leaving school)

I walked past a small shop front window on a side street at Burnie and noticed a pedestal with a large pad on it that someone had been drawing parts of an electrical circuit on it. There was a desk and a a couple of workbenches. I walked in and asked the guy at the desk if there was a job that led to a career.

Well, yes he said, we are looking for a young lad, but there are a number of tests that have to be sat for evaluation purposes. Can I come back early next week?

I did the tests, most of them were on mechanical movements and simple electrical circuitry. One test was to pull a small mechanical counter apart and then put it together.

After these test, I got bold and asked Mr. Norris, what do you really do here? Well he laughed, said I did well in the tests and that this was a small a technical depot of a very large American company National Cash Registers. From this office worked three men who travelled the Norwest Coast servicing and repairing cash registers, bank ledger machines and accounting computers.

They were looking for a mechanical equipment technician. I told Mr., Norris that I was colourblind and advised him I could not to work on anything electrical. He grabbed a power lead and asked me to identify the colours on this lead. The red, green and black cables were very obvious. "That's all you need to know." He said, and I was in!

National Cash Registers, became NCR for short.

I wore a suit, and was sent out with a small tool kit, bottles of oil, ink and a few screwdrivers, to oil up and ink cash registers in pubs, department stores and small businesses. I started with a simple no electric cash registers, which worked by pushing down the levers on the front with the dollars and cents on them. A bell would ring, and out would pop the

cash drawer, and in a window would be displayed the amount.
It was a clever little cash register and there were hundreds of them on the Norwest coast. Each had to be serviced every 3 months.
I progressed up to more sophisticated cash registers and small mechanical bookkeeping machines in tiny offices and banks.
I liked wearing a suit and travelling between towns and businesses. I had a number of places to visit each day and could sort out my own time frame to get them all done.
10:00 am was a special time to back at the depot, as Chester (Mr Norris the manager) and Charlie, and I would go down to the local coffee shop and have a cappuccino coffee. This habit seemed good and I was determined to keep it up!
Chester was in his late 30's, a bit of a lad in his day served his time as a mechanical fitter, then 2 years of national service and became an officer. He left the army and joined NCR. (Apparently, you don't start work at NCR, you join the company). He had been at the Burnie Technical Depot for more than 10 years.
He had a few young men work for him in the past. But none stayed very long. Chester was a Christian and preached occasionally at his church. He had a varied life and now was a gentleman.
It was Chester who taught me the basic movements in the smaller model cash registers. I soon became proficient enough to also go out and do repairs on these models.
Later, I moved on to motor driven cash registers that were used in checkouts in supermarkets and larger department stores. This put me into the big league.
At 17 I got my driver's license and was given the use of the company panel van. It was a 1966 Holden, white with NCR on both sides. Chester's famous last words to me as he handed over the keys for the first time was" *Remember, this has got letters on the side, everyone will know who you are if you do something wrong!"*
I have signed up for an apprenticeship but I did

not attend any night school or day school. All my training was from Chester,
NCR's main office was in Hobart. The state technical manager was ready for retirement. (He started NCR in Tasmania and delivered cash registers by horse and cart in the early 1920's.)
I met him once, on his only visit to Burnie when I was there. He was a small man, wore a grey dustcoat, and was fussed over as if he were a little general.
We polished the floors, washed the walls, and cleaned everything twice. The place sparkled, even our teeth.
Devonport had a technician who worked from home. John Dixon. He was a very secretive man, wheeled and dealt in secondhand landrovers and antique firearms. He called his wife "the Cook" and both of them had a passion for Porshe cars. John had a very old Porsche in his garage that he was restoring, (It once belonged to Barry Humphries). He bought the local doctors white Porsche soon after I started.
I would work occasionally with John, before I got my license, he would pick me up from home and drop me off in Devonport business centre for the day with a list of cash registers to service, then catch up with me at the end of the day. Where he went, I don't know.) Some lunch hours he would pick me up and I would get sausage egg and chips at home, that the Cook made. He would then move into a little room with a big armchair in front of a small open fireplace with a low mantelpiece. He would rest his feet on the mantle piece and read gun magazines until it was time to drop me back in town.
There was a cement factory near Devonport that had one of the early NCR computers. It was physically very large, model 500. It was used for accounting. The computer was electromechanical, and had heaps of relays in it. Chester would give me a fine sandpaper file and I would clean up the contacts on the relay. It felt great to work on one of these monsters. This computer worked on punch paper tape, and heaps of flashing lights and dials were

used to input data.
Every six months John, Charlie and I would go to the West Coast for 3 days to service the cash registers in the pubs and shops down there in Queenstown, Strauhan, Roseberry and Zeehan. These were mining towns and the place was always considered a pretty rough place to live. It always rained, and it was in a mountainous part of Tasmania, that would take some hours to get to. The road was winding and hilly.
We would stay in a hotel in Queenstown, I would be in and out of the pubs servicing the cash registers, there were some basic bars in that place. One barman told me not to spill any of the oil on the mat next to the cash register as they placed the glasses upside down on these mats. One time someone did spill oil and it got onto the glasses. The patrons complained that the beer tasted flat, and gave the publican heaps..
There was a funeral in Queenstown. As the hearse slowly moved down the main street, business would close their doors as it passed. I hadn't seen that before!
My first couple of years at NCR was the end of an era in the history of NCR in Tasmania. When the "old chappie" in Hobart retired, we fell under Melbourne administration. Chester and John saw this as a time to leave and Charlie wanted to be the manager at Burnie.
The manager from Melbourne came down to Burnie to tell us of the changes. He was surprised that I only had seen NCR in Burnie and invited me to come over to Melbourne to work for a week, to see what NCR was really all about.
I went the next week and had a great time in Melbourne. I was assigned to work with a young technician and travelled all over the central business area with him. Apparently, 10:00 am coffees happened here too. The technicians would meet at a coffee shop and moan about work, politics, whatever. NCR in Melbourne was going through a big change, people were ready to leave there too. In the next few months, NCR was going to shift to a new building in North Melbourne. The

changes didn't rest easy with these guys. NCR had moved rapidly into the computer and electronic cash register age. The mechanical cash registers and ledger machines were being replaced fast. Technicians were being assessed as either mechanical or potential for electronic training. The number of technicians needed was less than half. It was a bitter time.

Chester's hobby was building electronic organs; he was also electrifying an old pipe organ at a Burnie church. Chester wanted to do this full-time; he even wanted me to come in with him. I nearly did.

John Dixon, moved to Launceston and opened his own cash register shop. Charlie didn't become the manager and went to Hobart to work for the public service.

Mike Kelly came down from Sydney and he and I opened a new technical depot in Devonport.

The cement factory upgraded to a larger, more modern computer, and I was sent off to Sydney for some weeks to be trained on bank ledger machines. It seemed that Tasmania had become the dumping ground for older mechanical ledger machines in the banks, I thought that was great!

Dennis Mawby, started with us in Devonport. He had lived in Western Australia at Hamersley Mine for a few years and had now returned to the Norwest coast. His love was harness horse racing, he had bought a 2-acre property in Penguin, made a practice track, and Kayden Queen was his horse. Dennis was the one who encouraged me to move on from the Norwest coast. We would sit in our little office and watch the girls walk past. He used to say; one in four of each of the girls that walk past would probably do you for a wife.

I wanted more!

I moved down to Hobart when I was 18 and started to work there. The chance to get trained on computers was much greater down there, in Tassie's Own big smoke!

Over the next 3 years, I did a number of training stints in Sydney on various models of computers, and started to get a reasonable list of models that I

was proficient in. I kept quiet about my colour blindness,
I blew up some computers, but not due to colour mix-ups.
Providentially, when I was 15, I walked past a shop in a side street of Burnie and fell into a job that became a career.

Cars

On Friday nights as a high school kid, we used to stand on the footpath outside the milk bar and watch the boys cruise up and down Reiby Street, doin' the drag in the new machine!

Cars were things; you lowered, put fat tyres on and made sure it made a good noise. In your mind, it looked great, or would do if the body were done-up too!

My first car, which I bought at 16, was a 1955 Baby Austin, 4-door 850-cc sedan. I got it for $50 and spent hours on it. I painted it Hot Orange with a brush, painted the whole inside black, and pulled the engine to bits. Put new rings and bearings in it, new clutch and had the valves reground into the head. It was a beauty! The only problem was it only ran for about a minute then stopped! I tried many things to get it going, however, when I got my driver's license, I could drive Dad's car or use the NCR panel van.

The Baby Austin lived on the grass in the backyard. Later I sold it to Arne and Haneke, for $25. They put a new diaphragm in the petrol pump, and little orange terror cruised the streets of Ulverstone for a couple of years after that!

During the weekends I could use the NCR panel van, but was not allowed to take it off the Norwest Coast. I used to lend it to Dad and Dad would let me use his car for the weekend. He was very nice about that.

I saw a cheap Mini sedan in the paper and for $300 I bought a beauty. 1964 850-cc Mini, green and with a radio. The thing ran on the smell of an oily rag, and would not overheat if you didn't go over 60 miles per hour. I drove it down to Hobart one weekend with Anneita van Ek, we stopped at about 3 creeks to fill up the radiator, but it got there. Poor thing didn't live too long though. I was just about to turn into my home street in Ulverstone when a big Ford Falcon ran into the passenger side of my Mini and dented it almost in as far as the divers' seat.

I bought another Mini with a wooden panel inside, and I put extractors on the exhaust. It sounded like a bumblebee with grunt. I put fat little

tyres on it and it was green with a white roof. It was a weekend car, and I flogged it to death in a short period of time. I put rings and bearings in this one too, and just as I was putting the distributor drive back into the engine block, I dropped it and it fell into the gearbox. I was cross and pushed the mini onto the grass in our back lawn to rot. The nephews used to play in it, and I used to mow the grass around it.

It was time to get into hire purchase, so I bought a 1968 Holden Kingswood sedan. 6-cylinder, four-door with a bench seat in the front. (This was preferred as the girlfriend could sit next to you in the middle portion of the seat) It was cream in colour and looked like a car for a family man. It used a lot of petrol; I didn't get that girlfriend on the middle of the front seat. It was a great bus for getting youthclub people about, Dad didn't mind driving it, I had it for about 4 months then sold it, as I didn't like paying it off on hire purchase. I only put a small dent in the back mudguard.

I wanted to restore an old Holden so I bought a 1959 FC Special sedan. These were the pretty Holdens; full of chrome and a rolling shape to the body. It needed a new exhaust and some engine repairs. 1 parked it next to the Mini on the lawn, with the intention of getting it going one day.

I shifted down to Hobart and again had NCR Escort panel van there. I bought an older Holden 1964 EH sedan. It was blue with a white roof. It had a supposedly hoted up 6-cylinder (161ci) engine and had a lovely deep purr of an exhaust. It was fun to drive and just big enough to cart the boys around town. To own an EH was a hoon's car, But it only lived a few months and died also. No grass to park it on at our flat, so it was towed to the wreckers. Dad had the right idea, the week I left home, he phoned up the wreckers to take away my Mini and FC Holden. I suppose it made the lawn easier to mow.

I was getting older now 19 and need a bit more sophistication. I bought a French Renault 10.

It was bright yellow, engine the back, and could go anywhere. It has large plush seats and a radio

cassette player. It was a great car, only problem was that it overheated. The excess water flowed out of the radiator into a large glass jar. When this jar overfilled, it just exploded! Then $40.00 later a new jar would be fitted. I did this 3 times. Outside my flat I changed to crankshaft bearings while the motor was still in the car. While putting the oil sump back on, it slipped and the oil poured out all over my head. It was old black sump oil that people used to stain their fences and holiday houses. I washed it off with soap powder, Persil. I'm sure that's when I started losing hair. I had this car for about a year, then driving home to the Cross Street flat; I passed a parked car and ran head-on into a solid Holden. The whole front of my Renault caved in almost to the windscreen. (As the motor is in the back, there is very little support or anything in the front.) The Renault too, found a home at the wreckers.

Cars were never an investment with me, they sort of appeared, then either went to pasture or sold very cheaply to wreckers. The NCR panel vans also had unfortunate lives. The only part of an NCR van that I did not dent was the roof! I'm sure it wasn't my fault, most of the time.

I bought a motorbike. A Honda 360cc with crash bars on the front and rear. It was a beauty, bright red, and lots of get up and go. It was summer and great to ride around Hobart and down to Kingston. I didn't have a license for a Bike, so I tried to keep to the rules. I fell off it and replaced the front crash bars, once. I sold it to John, my flatmate who was a Uni. Student. He rode it for quite a while.I needed an image. So I bought a Ford Flacon Panel van. A surfie's machine. It was a sparkling, iridescent purple, with a long slide window in each side. I stuck a white shag pile carpet throughout the inside of the back section. Annette made pretty curtains for the side windows and across the back of the seat. I put speakers in the back and a 4-inch foam mattress covered the whole floor. It had surfboard roof racks, and looked the part next to any other surfie panel van at the beach. It was a good weekend car, as most of us in the flat or mates from

Kingston had panel vans. We would go off for weekends and sleep in them at a beach or out in the bush, it was a bit of a party machine. We would pick any place in Tassie and head off there in convoy. Tassie became a smaller Island. It was all innocent with me, but some nights I would swap it with Ross, my flat mate who had a small MG Midget sports car. He found other uses for it. I could fit into the MG Midget and burn around town, too!

This car didn't die, It took a long time to sell, but I sold it a few days before leaving Tassie on my overseas trip.

I had a few cars during my teenage years, I don't think I could be called a petrolhead in that I didn't spend a lot on them. I did learn a lot about car mechanics, and could do car talk with the best of the boys. I had lots of near scrapes and a few crashes and write-offs. I learnt to drive by touch driving I suppose

Tassie was a place where it was a given right to drive and own a car as soon as you can get a license and that's just what we all did.

Get a life

The big difference between a life at school and a life outside of school is that it's not regular anymore. The timetables, deadlines for projects and the peer group build-up to examinations are gone. You can wear what you like, and nobody really cares why you are in town during school hours. It's lonely at first.

I moved from school life, into holidays, and part-time work. The conversation at home changed from expectations for a good exam result to expectations for a job interview.

I now lived at home with Mum and Dad and Janet, all the others were either married or about to be.

My school friends disappeared into the big wide world of the Norwest Coast and I shrank into the comfort zone of family and church friends.

When I did get a regular job and started paying board, I didn't look for the old social life from my school days. I soon started going to the church. vouth club, and on Friday nights I would go to the van Tatenohoves and play cards (chase the lady, hearts). For a while, I would go out shooting with Eddie Dean, spotlighting rabbits from his car in any farmer's paddocks. We shot a lot of rabbits and must have terrorized nearby farmhouses at midnight.

The big change in my life came at the first Tasmanian youth club camp I went to. Tasmania had 5 youth clubs that met for a winter and a summer camp. During the year each club would hold an AGM that all the other clubs would come to visit and the host club would put on a play and entertainment evening. These were very popular. Dad used to help us with our plays as he had acted a lot in amateur theatre in Holland)

During the summer, when I was 16, the youth club national convention was held in Victor Harbour. It was held in a private school. About 600 people attended from all over Australia aged between 16 and early twenties. Victor Harbour is a beach resort, south of Adelaide. Cory was one of the organizers of the convention. It ran for a week.

We performed a play, "The Importance of being Ernest". We flew as a Tassie group to Melbourne then took an overnight bus to Victor Harbour, about 60 people from Tassie.
Later that year, the family traveled to Adelaide to Cory and Helen's wedding. Dirk and Gonny moved there, as he became the minister of Seacombe Gardens reformed church.
I became the secretary of the Tasmanian youth clubs and help organize the winter and summer camps (I used to type out reports and letters to the 5. clubs, that were read, but mostly for the fun of working through the grammar and spelling mistakes. It was an old typewriter!).
At my first youth club camp, I met Joffie and Dick Langerak from Launceston. I got on with them and weekends after would hitchhike to Launceston to spend the weekend there. It was a rapidly growing time. I became discerning with the music I listened too and started to listen to the lyrics of the modern-day prophets. Drop into parties that stank of grass and always had good music. Rosie's place was one of these party houses. I enjoyed the discovery but lived on the outer edge. It was also a time of shared deep religious soul searching. Why am I what 1 am, and where is God in all of this? There were girls and confused signals of adolescence that I interpreted in many ways.
At the winter camp, I met Joyce Vanderbom. I thought my life was set. I had found a minister's daughter like Cory had, and she was my height. We held hands, stole kisses, and sat together at meal times. I even took her home to Kingston in Marenus's Bedford van. I hadn't been to Kingston before. We wrote to each other during the rest of the year. I went to the Kingston Youth Club AGM and saw her. The following year Joyce moved to Melbourne to attend Uni to get a degree in Physiotherapy. It was one of those long-distance friendships, where most things happened in my head hundreds of miles away from the real thing. The Launceston weekends became more regular, and Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen became my words of wisdom. I started writing poetry, long

soul-searching walks along the beaches, trying to work out the mysteries of becoming me and being social.
I still went to church, after the evening service we held youth club each week. A few of my friends did their profession of faith and entered the community of the church. I couldn't just follow on, and although I had a faith, I rebelled, I suppose.
From my early teenage hood, I had a determination to make my own destiny and be responsible for it. This closed other people and their ideas out.
We shifted from my childhood house at Clara Street to 1 Golan Street right in the middle of town. Dad split the bedroom into 2 rooms for Janet and me, and the picture theatre across the car park was pulled down. (I had hoped to go to the pictures a lot living almost next to it)
Dad taught me to drive in his grey 1965 Holden. I took the test in a town with no stop lights, no dual lane roads, and only one oneway street (Wongi Lane) But there was a railway crossing and lights. That was the big test!
I also had a go at the family tradition of trying to help Mum and Dad to budget. It seemed we all went through this in our first year of work. Money just seemed to burn in my parent's pockets. But to be fair, Dad rarely had a full 12 months of work in the year, so there were periods of little money, followed by periods of paying off incurred debts.
Janet was in her early years at high school, and I , unfortunately, remained disinterested in her high school life. She did academically very well. She is on the schools Honour Board too!
I joined an Ulverstone men's volleyball team. We played in Devonport and Burnie. I had a good serve, but not much else to contribute to the team. We nearly won the final one year.
David Jack died in a car accident.
He bought an old Austin and cut a big hole in the roof, so that his
mates could stand up and shout a people as they drove past, it was a real hoot. He rolled the car and decapitated himself.
He was my paper round partner. It was cold, death was there, and youth was not invincible.

I had my cars to pull apart and tried to fix them. Dad converted the single garage into a very nice sleep-out. I had it made, my own little house.
(Unfortunately, I only lived in it for about 6 weeks, then left for Hobart to work)
I left home when I was 18 to take up a life of flatting and living with friends in Hobart. I would come back to Ulverstone to visit Mum and Dad some weekends and occasionally work back on the Norwest coast when someone went on holiday or training. My sleepout did get used, but not too long after I left home, Mum and Dad shifted to another part of Ulverstone, 17 Mason Street.

Flatting

I had arrived. Hobart was the big smoke, the place where young people went to for Uni or College. The first week in Hobart, NCR put me up in a hotel but advised to get a flat quickly.

I knew some people from the Hobart church youth, so a few of us got together and rented a house in North Hobart. I was opposite the football ground on a hill. The roof was popular on Saturdays when people would drag our bed mattresses up on the roof and watch the football. Arie from Ulverstone came down and found a job, Tony, a junior detective, shared my room. He had a police pistol that I wasn't pleased to have in my bedroom. His handcuffs were played with and a number of times, we had to phone Tony to come home and unlock someone from the fridge, or bathroom tap.

We all went to church and youth club. We even had the church elder call around and visit us. I used to climb in the lounge window and jump onto the couch. I did this one night, only to find two surprised church elders staring at me from the lounge chairs. The house became a home away from home for a lot of the youth club kids, and was never locked. So there always seemed to be people there. I bought a 16 ft racing yacht. Put it in the garage, and talked about sailing, but it never left the garage. The owners were away for 6 months and their daughter rented out the house. There was one locked bedroom that had all the stuff in it. For months each of us would sneak in without telling anyone else to grab the telephone, and plug it in to use it, then put it back in a locked room. We caught Arie with the phone one night and gave him heaps. Then it turned out we had all been doing it! We got it together with evening meals and ate well.

The owners came back and the bond went to them.

Our next flat was in a block of flats. I then flatted with John Hoogenhout and George. John had his own room and George and I shared a room. It was a noisy place as many of the flats in this block were party flats, with music all night. Goerge went back home, he didn't like washing and needed good meals. John

went to live in at the nurses' home.
I then moved into a large one-bedroom flat underneath a house in Sandy Bay. We fronted onto the river. You could fish from the backyard. The people upstairs were a young couple with kids, that never complained. At one party we bought heaps of pies. These were thrown around the flat. Walls covered with pies, toilet had soap powder put in it and overflowed bubbles into the living room. We took out the furniture and just hosed out the flat with the garden hose.
For a party prank, we put some condensed milk into condoms and threw them around the backyard near the door to the flat. Some police came to see Arie. They called Arie to their car and kindly advised him, not the through his used condoms out the door, but to put them in the rubbish bin. Arie passed on this advice.
We also took the bedroom light switch off the wall, left the bare wires exposed and asked people to check something in the bedroom. Listen for the scream as they get an electric shock. John de Deuge was the third flatmate. He was a Uni student and would invite his Launceston friends down at the weekend. They would sit around the flat, read comics, drink and eat pizzas. Arie and I left for pub adventures when the Launy boys came down.
John Hougenhout and Herman, wanted to come back into a flat. We found a very large house, mid-winter with a dance floor and bar. It was a freezing place. We had our own cabaret's and being on a hill, used to sit in the roof for evening drinks. We only lived in this place for about 6 weeks.
Then 34 Cross Street-, Street, was a house owned by the Greek who had previously rented us the downstairs one-bedroom flat. Six of us moved in, it had 4 bedrooms. We decided to buy each other 1 dozen beers each Friday. On warm nights we would take our beds outside, and there would be six beds in a row in the back yard. When it rained there was a mad rush to the back door. The back door had a few .22 bullet holes in it, as you could shoot from the front door at a paper target on the back

door. Good thing nobody walked in. We used to nail Arie's bedroom door shut, so he would be late to work. We carpeted the hallway with lots of offcuts of carpet taped together. It looked really good when the iridescent lights were turned on. It was a wild time, but we again ate well, and each had their own duty to do. Saturdays we always did a good flat clean up.

My 21" birthday was in the flat. The next morning, John Hoogenhout hosed me down and some of the others too. We tried to grow veggies and other things in the garden even had a dog for a while. Smoking "roll your own" cigarettes was cool, and even cooler to have some backy mixed with it. Everyone smoked, I didn't and never started.

I left this flat for Europe.

We had our tiffs as flat mates but tolerated each other's silliness, and basically got on well.

Youth club still came around, but besides a few beers, it was a pretty innocent flat full of blokes. John and George were nearly always in serious relationship. The rest of us just used to hang about together, occasional flings. The funny thing was that eventually most of the group married within the Church group, usually people they had known for a long time. It's a good way to keep the church together. The Launy boys even married Launy church girls. Dick married Sharon. Joffie married Karen and took off in my yellow Renault for their honeymoon, people were settling.

Youthclub and camps, conventions keep the young church people together and created a reasonably safe environment to find a life partner. It seemed a good idea for most young people I spent my Teenage years with.

Mainland

There is Tasmania and the mainland. The mainland is where we wanted to go, Sydney, and Melbourne had an attraction like a giant magnet.

I travelled to Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne for church youth conventions.

With NCR I had a few training stints in Sydney living in Kings Cross for 5 weeks at a time. I enjoyed these, as I would stay in a hotel in Darlinghurst is next door to Kings Cross. Sydney was full of life. I used to walk for miles through the streets, finding cafes, going to plays and just being part of being there. I got to know Sydney well and started to have regular places I would visit each time I returned for training. I even got to see a few concerts, Yes, Steele Eye Span, were the big ones. I used to like the Jazz bars.

One year Dirk and I hitched to Sydney, to go to a convention. I bought a canvas metal-framed rucksack and a good pair of hard-soled walking boots. We caught a lift nearly all the way from Melbourne to Sydney with a guy who was high on something most of the time and a runaway young man who wasn't sure why he was going to Sydney. On the way we free camped at a small dam. I lit a fire and the driver jumped into the dam for a swim. About halfway out, he yelled, "*Help, help, I can't swim*." I jumped in and pulled him to the bank. Silly prick, he was. It also turned out that Dirk and I paid for the petrol to get the car up to Sydney. In Sydney, we left them at Kings Cross. They were going to bludge off whoever they could up there. Dirk and I booked into a cheap hotel in the City and bought secondhand records, and camera gear and enjoyed the big city life. The youth club convention was at Stanwell Tops, just south of Sydney. I was second in the national quiz competition. I thought it was a joke competition and for the last question asked," *What Indian chief's name do you say when jumping out of an aeroplane?*" I answered, "*Sitting Bull!*" Tasmania didn't win the quiz shield that year.

The next year Rob Oates and I traveled by train to Cairns. We met a sugar cane farmer from Tully. Joe Screwi, an Italian. His claim to fame was that

he could drink a dozen raw eggs in one go! We stayed at his place and he proudly took us around his plantation. He had two farms and lived in an old wooden Queenslander farmhouse. This was up on stilts and had an open shower underneath. He and his wife would shower when the kids had gone to bed. We had 3 days of spaghetti, and saw a lot of Tully; Joe put on a special family gathering for us, heaps of Italians and wine. He was a nice bloke. We hired a car and drove north of Cairns, hired a dinghy and checked out the harbour south of Cairns and swam on the barrier reef.

I travelled to Adelaide a few times to see my brothers, a few people from Tassie were flatting in Melbourne. On my first training trip to Melbourne, I spent some time with them and got to know the Victorian crowd.

The youth club conventions helped to make contacts, so there were people I knew in most of the capital cities. I had a job that I could transfer to another city to live. My brothers had moved onto the mainland, to work and marry. I would not have minded to do the same, but somehow didn't click with a partner on the mainland.

I had a lot of free travel with my job, and most times took some time off after the training, to look around the place.

I think this made me restless, and want more than to settle into a regular life in Tassie.

My flatting days were not consistent, with breaks of 4 or more weeks, every 8 months or so, when 1 would be away. There were always changes when I came back.

Life does go on, with or without me around!

Part Two - Overseas

Early Days Yet

This was the time when going to Europe wasn't called the Big OE, at least not in Tassie, It was an event! It was the "Big European Trip."

Full picture on the front of the Qantas, Youth fares to Europe, booklet.

Yep! The temptation to go, the call of the other side blazed at me from travel bureau windows, wherever I went during my later teenage years.

I had, by this time traveled a fair bit of Australia. Through work, I have made various trips to Sydney and Melbourne, and with youth club convention camps, I had been to Adelaide and hitchhiked up to Cairns with Rob Oates (my workmate)

A few of my friends had spent 8-10 months in Holland, staying with relatives, at various times. Cory and Helen spent a year in Holland and 6 weeks travelling central Europe in a Renault 4, with Helen's sister. Apart from that, I didn't know anyone who had travelled to Europe, and bummed around Europe.

I tried to work out many different ways of getting to Europe; I didn't want to go via the USA, and had to see Katmandu. (So the travel brochures said anyway!)

At one time I wanted to go via Indonesia, Start at Bali and Island hop to India, then by train up to Katmandu. I even got a stack of small records from the Indonesian Embassy, to teach myself Indonesian. This drove my flatmates mad!

My flatmates got a bit sick of my relentless changes of plan getting to Europe. I think they thought I was all talk.

I started saving seriously for the trip when I was about 20. Cars and trips within Australia had taken most of the money till then. I had a good job and could save easily enough.

Getting an Aussie passport was the first step, and once I had possession of this, it burned in my hands.

Rob Oates and I usually had a coffee and raisin toast, at Aladdin's Café in Hobart. There was a rhyme on the wall about Aladdin travelling to faraway places for a coffee, I suppose.

Well, Rob and I made a pact, to have a coffee under

the Eiffel Tower. That was it, and eventually we did. My passport was over a year old now; I sent it off to the British Embassy in Canberra and received a work permit for the UK. It was valid for the next six months after February 1977. I had to go before this expired. I was 21, had a bit saved up, and gave 3 months' notice at NCR and booked a cheap ship/Jet passage to the UK leaving Tassie in late April 1977. All things began to get more focussed on going. I had collected things that I had to sell, I had an 18 ft racing yacht (That I had never sailed) A Ford Falcon iridescent Purple Panel Van, fitted out with white fluffy carpet, Surfboard racks on the roof and sliding side windows. (Sounds cool, but the windows leaked and made the carpet smell like a dead dog, after a rain!) Stereo and records. This was the usual claim to fame any 20-year-old Tasmanian had. What didn't sell I gave away, or just left behind.

Joyce came back to Tassie to live and wanted to go out. We did a few times, time had moved on, and my first love no longer took possession of me. I wanted to go, I wanted to travel. The spark had gone. There was a farewell at work, and the usual seeya in 3 months, (at least the old job was still open!) I had to go via Melbourne to pick up my leaving holiday pay, I wanted to keep the job option open. The flat gave me a good send-off (there were still 5 of us at Cross Street) but the flatting days were numbered, relationships were getting well developed and the split to a more settled life was inevitable. Boys to men!

I hitched up to Ulverstone from Hobart with Annette. My old green rucksack on my back and Annette, who wanted to travel, but couldn't get to the stage to leave. I liked her a lot and enjoyed the slow hitch up the Ulverstone (I think we got a taxi for the last 10 miles.)

I left Tasmania from Devonport (near Ulverstone) On the "Empress of Australia", a 14 hour overnight trip on the ferry to Melbourne. It was a nice way to leave Tassie, holding streamers from the ship's railing and waving farewell to Mum and Dad as the ship pulled out into the Mersey

River to turn and head off out to the Bass Straight, to rock and lurch its way to Melbourne.
What did I feel? I'm on my way, it's on!! I'm on a new path, adventure is not dead!

Getting There

Morning broke over Port Philip Bay as we passed by the Prom and sailed on to Melbourne. Melbourne to a Tasmanian, is the Big Smoke! I rang the Dutch embassy in Melbourne to check on a work permit for Holland, I could see the person involved until mid-afternoon. I dropped into NCR to pick up my leave pay and to say hello to my Technical Manager. I had to wait a few hours for the Pay, and the manager turned out to be too busy to see me. I missed the appointment at the Dutch Embassy. Stuff Melbourne, I boarded the night train to Adelaide, just in time!

I walked through the train, to the back carriages; these were full of younger people, playing music, stretched across seats, with the stench of dope in the air. I threw my pack on a seat and stretched out on the one across the aisle from it.

The last few hours into Adelaide is a downhill run. I sat next to the girl, shared breakfast and felt the sunshine. Adelaide was warm, and laid back, I stayed the night with Dirk and Gonny. (Gonny offered to do my washing, I've been reminded of that ever since.)

I flew to Perth. I hadn't been to Perth. The first thing you see when walking from the plane to the terminal is a black swan, in a small pool, with its leg tied to a chain. Joanna met me there. She had moved over with her family a few years earlier and now rents a house with her sister, and teaches at the local Christian school. I had a whirlwind tour of Perth and walked through the Uni. Gardens, sandstone buildings and harbour views, while Joanna had to attend lectures. That night we settled down to southern comfort and relived Tassie's times and stories. Jo's sister Sissy, took me to the Russian Ship, Turkmenia. It was a 250-passenger ship about the size of the ferry I took from Tassie to Melbourne. I had a berth in a 4-berth cabin on the lowest deck. Sissy and I walked through the ship, checked out the salon rooms and swimming pools. Yep! This will do for the next 7 nights. We left Perth in the dark, headed out to sea, not to see land again until we came close to Singapore!

Shipjet to London

Shipjet fares to London were the cheapest one-way fares. This was a flight from Adelaide to Perth, a Ship to Singapore and a charter flight to the UK, about $650.00. With a shipjet ticket and $1800 in cash, I thought I could conquer the world. (After all, if you got stuck, the Aussie high commission was supposed to fly You home and you pay later.)

The return flights from the UK were supposed to be about $600, so I planned to keep $600 in a bank somewhere.

Leaving Fremantle was great, a bold sunset over the sea, streamers thrown from ship to shore, big a hoot from the ship's horn, and slowly we pulled away from the dock into the sunset.

Life on board the Turkmenia was a cross between a ferry trip and a poor man's cruise. I shared my cabin with 3 other men, Bryan a sheerer from Mt Many Peaks Station about 400 miles northeast of Perth, (He turned out to be the station owners son.), Steve a Welshman, who had just spent the summer season in Tassie fighting bushfires, and another guy who I didn't get to know. Steve was in his late twenties, a stud and well sought after by the women. So he left a signal to keep us out of the cabin when he was occupied with a lady. (We got around that one, by getting back to the cabin early and leaving the signal for him to stay out.) He had his favourite lifeboat too!

Tough life being the ship's stud!

The rolling waves were constant, and clouds kept the sun away for most of the voyage.

There was a daily newspaper that reported on people's love life, what was on at the movies that afternoon and how far we had sailed.

The passengers were mostly young people, although there was a family of young teenage kids that hated the trip, constantly moaning that there is nothing to do for kids. At the other end of the scale was an elderly couple, we called the professor and his wife. Their cabin was a few doors down from the main salon. They complained bitterly about the noise after 10 pm. Why they didn't shift elsewhere, I don't know.

All the staff were Russian, the older bar lady was called Irene, Guess what! We sang " *Good night Irene, Good night Irene*" every time the bar closed, apparently this happened every voyage. She was sick of it! There was a big Russian woman who took the fitness session in the mornings and an Aussie couple who formed the band.
We had a talent night one night; Steve had met up with Sue a Kiwi and accompanied Sue in full Welsh gusto, pokare kareana. I did dog yelps from the bar all through it!
There was a horse race with small wooden horses being pulled forward by winding up on a stick with the string attached to it. Bryan was in on this; He was a sheerer and a Gunn for the race. His knee gave in during the race and he had to retire. He told us later that he had a sewing needle still embedded under his kneecap that he'll have to get out when he gets back to Aussie.)
Nearer to the equator, we saw schools of flying fish leap out of the water and fly about a meter above the water for about 100 meters or more. It was a great display and the only sea life we saw. It's a lonely sea off the West Coast of Australia.
When we crossed the equator, it was a stinking hot day, and calm. The Russian sailors put on a crossing the equator show where they covered themselves in brown stuff and read out a very large petition to the captain. It seemed very serious. Everyone was thrown into the pool afterwards.
The ship's pool had large round port windows in the sides, underwater. Below deck was the pool bar, you sat at the bar and watched the people in the pool from underwater level. It was a popular bar, depending on who was in the pool.
Drinking was the big event on this ship. Early mornings became the sailor's great delight as they would wash down the decks, with power water hoses, washing off the spew and hard cases that were asleep on the deck where they dropped.
The days were becoming a routine, breakfast, moan about the hangover, sleep, cards in the salon, movie in the afternoon, and general laze about till

evening meal and party till drop.
I read a bit and had some pleasant times with some of the passengers. We were all off to travel. and had a lot in common. Those who had travelled before were well questioned.
Bryan, Sue, Steve and I started to get on well together. There was also Sandy and Kerry in our group.
Arriving at Singapore, I was amazed at the huge number of cargo ships waiting at anchor, to get into port. We had passed through the Straight of Malucca, the day before. This straight was full of small tropical islands and sea oil platforms with their towers issuing a huge flame.
We berthed at Singapore, the money changers came onboard and set up business on the salon tables. We lined up to change our money and took any rate that was offered. Lambs to the slaughter, we found out later. (Apparently, the ship steward was in on this racket.)
Busses assigned, we moved off to one of the two hotels allocated to us. After 7 days at sea, the land moved under our feet!

Singapore

Singapore was a 2-night stopover route to the The UK. It was a great stopover for a naïve traveller. It had the entire mystique expected from a tropical city. Singapore was in the process of modernization, but still had a lot of the colonial charm about it. On the bus trip to the hotels, we passed through narrow streets congested with all forms of transport including bicycle rickshaws and small motorcycle-type pickups. The bamboo shantytowns with kids everywhere and Chinese-looking people everywhere. The hotels we were booked into, were old but had everything. Sandy and Sue were in the other one a few streets away. It was midday; we booked, into a room. Hungover from the last night on the ship party we crashed for a while.

Nearby, new residential apartment buildings were rising up. These were concrete 20-plus stories with bamboo scaffolding attached to the side of them. Long pieces of bamboo tied into a framework with wire and small Chinese labourers climbing all over like monkeys. The completed ones all had bamboo poles sticking out of the balconies full of washing flapping in the breeze.

That night, we went out by a taxi to see one of Bryan's Malaysian friends. He used to work with Bryan on a live sheep ship that sailed between Perth and the Middle East carrying thousands of sheep. Bryan was some sort of vet. Basically, he sorted out the dead sheep and threw them overboard.

This guy lived with his Chinese wife and child in a high-rise apartment. It was painted concrete and that was about it. Had a TV and 2 rooms. He reckoned he was well off! He took us to a nightclub. It was a large place full of Chinese, a cabaret show and lots of friendly women. Frightened the daylights out of me. We had a great Chinese meal, then off in the taxi, to what turned out to be to a brothel. I had lived in Sydney's Kings Cross for many weeks while attending training courses for NCR and pros and brothels were commonplace there, I had seen this lifestyle before. This place was somewhere else. We were seated on a couch

and Asian girls were paraded in front of us carrying a number. Pick a number. Drinks were free and more drunken Aussies were waiting outside to get their place on the couch. It scared me!
The next day, I walked over to the girl's hotel and found Sandy having Breakfast on the terrace. It was a lovely old Hotel in a huge garden with a large terrace veranda overlooking the gardens. The girls had gone out to a city Chinese restaurant with others from the ship and had a great night out. Good on em!
We headed off into the city and off to shop. Sandy after clothes, and me after a camera. We found Change Alley where Indians change money out of small suitcases. I finished up with a Rolex mini camera and, a small multiband radio and Sandy looked good in flowing tropical dresses. We saw Steve and Sue perched up in the back of a rickshaw with some poor Chinese peddling to a sweat in front of them. Bottle of champagne and glasses, they were doing it in style! Gin sling at Raffles Hotel was next. I hadn't heard of the place before, a lovely old hotel. It seems Gin slings had been served here for quite some time!
We took the cable car to Sentosa Island. It was way up there; I had never been in a cable car before. Singapore stretched out before us. It certainly is a large Island, surrounded by ships.
That evening we dressed up and headed off to Bogis Street. It is a large outdoor market that transforms into a thriving outdoor restaurant. Long trestle tables are set up in the Market Square. The surrounding buildings transform into kitchens, electric lanterns strung across the poles and in flow the tourists. Great atmosphere, lots of street hawkers try to sell stuff while you are at the table. Later in the evening flower sellers came and dildo, and vibrator sellers followed. Our table was full of vibrators buzzing all over the place, much to the squeals of the ladies.
Bottle of wine in hand, Sandy and I headed off to walk along the river and eventually back to her hotel. I put her to bed and walked back to mine.
Singapore airport was famous a few years earlier

for any bloke who had shoulder length hair or longer. When you came off the plane, you had to get yours cut or you wouldn't be allowed in. I looked for the infamous barber chairs in the airport lounge, but it seems those days have gone!
Most of the ship people met up again to fly off to the UK. It was rumoured that the last group drank the plane dry. It turned out an easy feat, as the free drinks or any drinks on this plane were numbered.
Touched down at Gatwick on 11 May 1977.
UK I'm here!

UK

The first Brit I spoke to in the UK was a custom official Indian wearing a turban. He asked how long I wanted to stay and how much money I had. I told him 6 months and plenty of money. Stamp on the passport page and I was in, simple as that.
Quick farewells at the airport, the comfort of group travel behind, a few of us set off to guest house in Kensington which Bryan's sister stayed at a year before. The guesthouse was crowded, five of us were put into a room and told to sleep on the floor, six pounds each night! We could stay 3 nights.
Steve, Sue and Sandy were off to Wales the next day to stay at Steve's mum's place, Bryan was off to Australia House in the Strand to buy a Kombi. I hired a 10-speed bike with panniers, next door for 4 weeks, stored my rucksack and what I thought I didn't need, bought a small tent and headed for the sea, Brighton on the Sea. I had, 6 Hoel y Coed Pontycleen is an address about 10 miles inland from Cardiff. I planned to meet up with the gang in about 7 days.
A black London taxicab took me to the outskirts of London heading south. There is enough room in the back of one of these things to put you and a 10-speed bike!
I left early and took a lesser country road through Sussex to Brighton. It was a glorious bike ride, I peddled through small villages, and past ancient farms, everything was English. I even had a pint in a country Pub on the way.
I was a YHA member and planned to stay in these on the way. They are funny places, they close between 10 am and 4 pm, you can't book a place beforehand and strictly segregated, boys and girls as far apart as possible.
The first one I stayed in was just before Brighton, a very old coach inn. The other hang-up they had was that a duty was given before you left. Mine became a regular one wherever I went; I cleaned the toilets. Pommie humour towards Australians!
Brighton does have a pier and the beach is black gravel, the water is freezing and it's not hard to get an ice cream in a cone. I peddled along the

beachside promenade and headed along the coast to Southampton.
The coast road went through many small seaside villages with small old hotels, guesthouses and café's. My legs were stiff and my backside saw, I made it just over halfway to Southampton, at Bognor Regis and put the bike on the train for the rest of the trip to Southampton.
The Ferry from the docks to the Isle of White moved through the harbour that so many English emigrants had seen the last of Merry old England as their 10-pound tickets took them across the seas to Australia in crowded emigrant ships.
Isle of White had one of the big rock concerts a few years earlier, Bob Dylan had played there. I peddled across it and around a good part of it. Even went to church on Sunday. Certainly a dull island. I took the barge across to Limmington past all the pleasure craft moored in the estuary and stayed the night in New Forrest. Then through the country lanes into the Salisbury Plains, to a B&B. The cathedral was worth the visit, I peddled up to Stonehenge. On the way, there were many thatched cottages neatly trimmed like they had just had a haircut. The thatcher left his trademark on each cottage with a pheasant made out of thatch on the top corner of each of the roofs.
Stonehenge was at the side of the road, paid a pound to get into the paddock and walked up to touch these massive ancient stones. I sat on the altar stone in the middle and just about had the place to myself; tourist season hadn't started yet.
That day I made it to Bath. A pretty city with a large flowing river and terrace houses. I bumped into a French Canadian girl I had met in Salisbury, we both stayed at the same B&B and had a pleasant next day looking around Bath. I was enjoying the biking by now and could put in a few miles each day. The small English villages all seem to have a grocery store and a pub. The pubs are welcoming with open fires and old men with dogs warming themselves, with a pint in hand. Sleepy dogs, pipe tobacco smoke, and the crackle of the fire seem to take up the daytime hours.

To peddle across the suspension bridge over the Severn River is something. It's a very high, long bridge with a stiff breeze blowing across it. Far below the Severn River flowing rapidly, heaps of water. That night I stayed in an old castle at Chepstow, just north of Wales. I was the only one there (it was a YHA), and the caretaker was a young pom, who enjoyed the company, He cooked up a good meal and afterwards, drank himself stupid. It was a good night.
I peddled alongside the Severn down to Cardiff, turned off inland, uphill for about 10 miles to Pontycleen.

Kombi Campers

Bryan's very old VW Kombi was parked outside of Steve's place. They were down at the local; (this one didn't shut in the afternoons, Welsh!).

My bike lived on the Kombi roof for the next few weeks; Bryan rode it for a few miles one day with us following slowly behind.

I was a bit of local news at the pub, which caused a few smiles, I was now "The mad Aussie who pushbiked from London to Wales.

In Pontycleen they speak Welsh, and other sorts of English, eat hot pork pies and drink a lot of beer. If you are lucky, you drive down hill to Cardiff and eat Indian curry. No one seems to have a job and the country's in ruin. Everyone seemed to be related, and could talk the leg off an iron pot!

The next few weeks we travelled as spectators, looking at many parts of Wales, England and Scotland. Bryan was the driver, Steve and Sue moaned about the cold, and Sandy and I got on well.

We had a rough plan, get to the top, John O' Groats, and back down to London. Steve wanted to show us Wales, Bryan wanted to see Mt Snowdon, and Sue wanted to see if parts of Scotland were like her New Zealand, and Sandy and I just wanted to come along for the ride.

The energetic old Kombi took us through ancient lanes; over Scottish Mountain passes, and into the lonely, desolate lochs and Kyle's.

Wales was Steve's home turf and he tried to show us all of it. We stormed the castle at Cardiff, Walked part of Black Mountain up at Brecon Beacons, and slummed it in Swansea. Sat on the cliff at St David's and watched the ferry head off to Ireland from Fishguard. I wanted to visit Dylan Thomas's house, We decided to walk along the seashore and across the mudflats to it. It was low tide; the mud just about swallowed us. Caked in mud, we head back to the Kombi, who was Dylan Thomas anyway.

There's a lot of green in the country of Wales and a a lot of greys in the towns and cities.

Northern Wales had its Mt Snowden and slate

mines. Steve nearly wept when he saw Snowden. In one of the streams flowing down from Snowden, we spotted trout from an old stone bridge. Many of the Welsh spoke Welsh and we felt in a foreign country, place names were unpronounceable and the radio had Welsh news and chatter programmes.
We played on the sand dune beaches and stared at the cold sea, ankle deep was about as much as we dared in that cold surf.
I had my small tent and we swapped between the tent and Kombi. Bryan was a diehard Ockker, he slept on his swag outside, next to the Kombi and pulled his canvas sheet over him if it got wet. Real outback man!
Sandy had to get back to London, We dropped her off at Chester at the bus station. Chester with its Tudor-style buildings in the City Square was a nice place to say goodbye to Sandy. I had grown close to her and we played the butterfly game, "*let it go and see if it will return*". We had only started on our journey overseas and both had more to do. It was a pleasant ship romance that extended into the UK.
Scotland was our playground. We wanted to play golf at St Andrews, So we hired a set of clubs between us, and teed off from the second hole. The first hole was in front of the clubhouse, and that meant it was harder to sneak on! Steve wanted to take the golf clubs home, but somehow we got him to return them. It was a bit hard sharing the clubs between the four and not holding up the group behind us. But still, we were playing at the home of golf!
Edinburgh Castle, Arthur's seat, and gloomy Glasgow all visited. The highlands were stark and Sue felt at home. Steve wanted to stalk deer, and Bryan nearly ran into a very hairy cow that wandered freely up there. We froze at John O' Groats, and couldn't make a word out of what was said at the Wick pub. Bryan thought it was hilarious being in a Scots pub and not understanding a word that was said. Britain is like that, with great variations in spoken English, with Welsh, Scottish and Cornish thrown in!
We free camped in a few places to use showers. Basically, it meant, to have a shower when you arrived

and leave early in the morning, without paying. Steve reckoned it was the normal thing if the camp wasn't up to scratch. No wonder Aussies in a Kombi had a reputation in campgrounds.

Halfway down the M1 to London, Steve and Sue caught a bus back to Cardiff. Bryan and I headed for Australia House in the Strand to sell the Kombi. In all, we did get on well during the trip, saw a lot and enjoyed each other's company. Got up to a bit of mischief, and departed good friends.

Selling a Kombi outside Australia House is an exercise in holding a parking spot. Its 1-hour parking, so someone has to hold the spot while the Kombi is driven around the block. The parking warden's watchful eye until 5:00 pm. Then out with the gas stoves and brew a tea, settle in for the night, to start all over again at 9:00 in the morning. It took 3 days to sell the Kombi. The people who bought it were Aussies, off to the continent. Bryan and I wondered where this Kombi had been in its life.

Bryan went to Scandinavia.

I thought it would be a good idea to get a motorbike. Bryan said it had to be a Pommie Bike. I bought a 1974 Triumph Bonnevile 650 cc. It was fitted out for touring. It had fibreglass panniers on each side of the back wheel and a lock-up fibreglass box behind the seat. The handlebars had a fibreglass flaring with a small screen. It was a beauty with a square maroon tank. I paid my return airfare money for the bike and it was mine.

I had a bike in Hobart but didn't get around to getting a license. The guy sold it to me with a fake green card and threw in his helmet. (That meant it was insured, as far as customs officials were concerned when I got to the Continent)

I took what I could out of my rucksack and stuffed it into my bike panniers, tent included. I again left my rucksack at the guesthouse at Kensington.

I revved up the Bonnie and rode down to Dover to get across to France.

Continent

Vive La France!

And I said at high school'" why bother learning French, I'm never going to go to France!"

So here I am at Boulogne on 13 June, summertime. The change to French was dramatic. Getting off an English ferry with all its familiarity, onto French soil was a good introduction to the different lifestyle on the continent.

I rode away from the wharf area, found a seat outside a café, ordered a café a lait, and wondered what to do next.

France seems large, the map shows towns, villages, and cities everywhere. It was summer, I wanted warmth and golden sand. I had heard that Biarritz down in the south of France just above Spain on the Bay of Biscay was the place.

I wanted to get there on the smaller roads, through villages and small towns. During the war my dad had worked near Rouen on a farm, that was a start.

I headed off to Rouen, and found it great to be burning along on the Bonnie with the deep rumble coming out of my exhaust. It was left-handside driving. I soon found out how easy it is to travel on a bike. Get into a small crowded village and just park on the footpath outside the shops. Get confused at roundabout road signs, easy just pull up onto the roundabout and read the signs at leisure! Also, you hear so much of what is going on around you on a bike, especially huge trucks up your backside.

On the straight, I would pull back on the throttle and up to speed she'd go. The Bonnie had a lot of poke. I passed through Amiens , had a look at the Rouen cathedral walked through the old centre of Alencon, and tried to figure out the racing circuit at Le Mans. I was getting right into riding the bike now and loving it!

Bordeaux, the old red wine centre of France was A huge city. It's at the end of a large estuary-type river, with wine warehouses lining the river. I did want to stay there, but headed off to the coast, the map said there were 2 small lakes there. It was a flat, green

coastal plain, dotted with a few small villages. Grapes everywhere. I found a small camping ground and stayed there a couple of days. It was a country camp, an occasional tourist. I met a middle-aged English couple who had a caravan permanently there. It had its own little flower garden and paths. They knew all the restaurants and menus. This was their secret holiday place and had been for years. Biarritz did have the beaches, but for the rest, Including the old castle, it was not a very exciting place. It was a holiday place for those with money and flashy clothes. The most impressive building was the casino.

Just to the south was the mountain range that divides France from Spain, the Pyrenees. I rode along the rolling foothills, and mountain peaks to the south to Lourdes. Lourdes was the catholic centre of Southern France. It has a huge cathedral, (That is actually 3 built on top of each other.) Just behind the cathedral is a cave with a stream running out of it. St Bernadette, years ago had a vision of Mary in this Grotto. Since then the water has been said to have healing powers. Good Catholics from all over the world like to be christened by the Lourdes water. The sick try getting to Lourdes to bathe In the water, or drink it, to receive miracles of healing. Many claim a miracle every year.

Every day around midday, a huge outdoor mass is held in front of the cathedral assembled there were sick people in wheelchairs, beds on wheels, or just sitting on chairs. The religious ceremony performed in various languages was moving.

Lourdes, if full of Pensions (small hotels) and restaurants. Heaps of tourist shops with gaudy catholic statues of Mary or Jesus on the Cross. At lot of these were miniature flasks to hold the Lourdes water. I stayed in the "le camping". It was here that I lost my traveller's cheques. It took 4 days to get them replaced, by American Express. So with very little money, I ate French breadsticks and became a good catholic, going to mass every day. It all happens at the cathedral in Lourdes. When my Traveler's cheques arrived, I packed up and headed into the mountain pass of the

Pyrenees to find a restaurant and a good meal. I eventually found myself high up in the mountains, in a French alpine village, pine trees, and clouds to ride through.
I free camped and then headed down the mountains to travel further east, then up the mountain again to the tiny country on top of the Pyrexes, Andorra.
I camped just outside, Andorra la Vella, and checked out the tavernas in the top of the world Spanish speaking little city. It is a tax haven, full of bargains, and cheap booze. These tavernas were full of life, compared to the sombre Lourdes. Snow-covered mountain peaks around me, in summer.
I wanted to take a small road down the other side to Spain. (It looked like a shortcut.) Just out of Andorra la Vella, I picked up this tall Frenchman who wanted a lift. We headed off down this one-lane mountain pass down to the Plains of Spain. I turned a corner, This wiry French guy leaned the other way, and over on the side we went. I went through the small windscreen of my bike, with the Frog on my back, skidding along the gravel. When we stopped, I had skinned and cut open knees, with one of my hands cut open. I felt sore and stuffed. The A French guy got up, pulled a camera out of his small backpack and took a photo of me lying there. Odd bastard! We got back on the bike and slowly made it down to a Spanish village with a nunnery/ first aid place. I got my cuts attended to. The Frenchman continued hitchhiking, and the nuns didn't want payment. They just waved and said no need. These were real sisters of mercy!
My bike had a few scrapes on it and I took off the rest of the perspex windscreen. I suppose I got too cocky.
This part of Spain was dry, flat and had few towns. It looked a lot poorer than the France I had seen and at a much slower pace of life. The big city in this area was Zaragoza. I rode through it, a few grand sandstone buildings, a tired-looking place. I saw the police soldiers of Span there. The guardia de civil. These men in grey uniforms wore grey tin hats like small-rimmed cowboy hats. The back of the rim was flatted upwards. It was said

this was done so that they could lean against walls without their tin hat falling off.
I wanted to get to Pamplona, the running of the bulls. I had read about this in Hemingway. It was also one of the "must see" talked about on the ship.
A couple of hours before Pamplona is a small lake, Embalse de Yesa. I was a few days too early for the San Fernin carnival at Pamplona, and decided to camp there for a few days.
I was not the only Aussie with this idea. There were quite a few Aussies and Kiwi's camping there. The days were hot, the small lake was pleasant to swim in, and it was nice to be in the company of Aussies and Kiwis again. The whaft of grilled chicken took over the campground from midday onwards, outside the small campground taverna was a large rotisserie with heaps of chickens on each skewer. Eventually, you would break down and buy a roast chicken and cold beer. (That's the only way you could buy it, a complete chicken!)
I got on well with a couple of Queenslanders who were travelling in a Ford escort van. They had been down to Morocco, now Pamplona and then via Venice to the Oktoberfest in Germany. (The Aussie tour.) One of the nights we were crowded into the Aussie tent to listen to the Rugby test between the Aussies and Kiwis. I thought All Blacks, meant they were all Maori. Much drinking and tackles, in the tent. The rest of the campers were not amused as this was in the small hours of the morning. I learned how to rugby tackle. (This was a sport no one played in Tassie)
My battery on the Bonnie died, So off to Zaragoza we went in the small panel van. Drink drive was common with these Queenslanders and it was great that we found our way back to camp, let alone, to get back safely!
Pamplona was crowded. We set up our tents with a many others near a taverna at the bottom of the ancient castle wall.
The castle was ruined long ago and the walls once protected a small town. Now this was the old part of town with a cobblestone square and old

tavernas around this poor man's square. There was a small fountain in the centre with a statue rising out of the centre of it. We would walk up the hill to this square, then into the streets where the bulls ran. Each day through these streets heaps of drunken young men would try to outrun a dozen or so bulls that would run flat out trampling these brave idiots. The idea was to wave a hankie in the bull's face and then step out of the way. Only problem was there were about 500 young men wanting to do this to a dozen petrified bulls. The bulls trampled many and even a few gored by the bull's horns. The road ended at the Bullring, and this is where the bulls ran. Hundreds of people lined these streets, sitting on the 6-foot fences that closed off the streets not used. If you were silly enough to run, these people on the fences made sure you couldn't get out of the Bull Run. The only protection you could find would be door entrances on the way. I was going to run, but when I saw the terrified faces of young men trying to get out of the run, being pushed back in the run by the ones on the fences, I thought differently!

Another thing in Pamplona, the carnival didn't stop. The taverna where we camped never closed, music blaring out all the time.

The taste of Spanish wine grows on you, The whites are very sweet, and the Reds bitter. The cheapest way to buy wine was from filling our own, shops we called holes in the wall. These would fill up any bottle you brought in. I remember getting a taste for the sweet white. One Spaniard, pointed at the bottle and made a sign with his arms of someone blowing up big and fat, then pointed at me. I think he preferred the Reds..

It was getting to the end of the San Fernin, and we were up at the old Square when a bunch of Young guys in white, with red scarves can into the square waving black flags with an A in a circle on them. They were shouting and jeering. One guy climbed up the statue in the fountain and tied the flag to the top of it, and started to waving and jeering to the crowd. Just then whistles and heaps of Guardia de civil charged into the square. The

taverna doors slammed shut, and this poor bastard up the statue with the flag, got pulled down with a thud onto the cobblestones. The Guardia then started belting anyone in sight with batons. It was ugly.
These young guys were Basque and it was a political thing. Spain was at this time under the dictator General Franco. He didn't stuff about.
5 days was enough, I had my dose of Australiana, and wanted to move on, hit the road again on my Bonnie.
San Sebastian is the most northern city in the Bay of Biscay in Spain. It is an old city with a large sweeping bay, lined with posh hotels with a castle on the northern end of the bay. Behind the castle on the highest point of the hill, is a huge white statue of San Sebastian with arms spread out.
I free camped just out of town and enjoyed walking about this city. It used to be the summer retreat for the English many years gone by, It even had a very old square, that had balcony-lined houses around it. It was said that this was one of the earliest Bull Rings in Spain.
I headed back into France and rode all day across to the Mediterranean. I could either go through the French Riviera to Italy or up to the Alps through the Mt Blanc tunnel to Italy. I wanted to see the Alps!
I stopped at Avignon. It was the home of the French Popes and also the place with the bridge. " *Sur la pont, d'Avignon....*" The only French song we learnt at school. I stayed in a small village north of there. The Town Square was tree-lined and simple. Many old men were playing petenque, the warm evening air, and the smell of the flowering trees, made this a special place. It was one of those off-the-way places that only the locals bother to go to in the evenings to sit in the café and enjoy the summer evenings.
I headed to the French Alps, Chamonix. This was the ski centre of France. It was summer, no skiing, the only snow was the peak of Mt Blanc across the valley. What an impressive sight these Alps are. I had never seen so many snow-covered

mountain peaks.
Through the Mt Blanc tunnel, out into Italy.
Just outside Milano in Lombadry, the northern province of Italy, I decided to stay in a huge international camping ground complete with piscine, (swimming pool) this camping ground had everything, from shops, supermarkets, and restaurants, no need to ever leave the grounds. I met up with a Dutch couple touring on a new Triumph. They had the flashiest leather gear and the bike was well fitted out for touring. (I rode my bike wearing my old suede walking boots, japara oil skin jacket and jeans. With imitation leather skiing gloves I bought in Andorra.)
Just north of here is Lake Como. It is at the foot of the Italian Alps, and a very beautiful lake, with this mountain backdrop,
I was on my way to Venice and didn't get deep into Italy. One night I decided to free camp in a cornfield. I rode my bike into the tall corn, flattened out a space and slept out in the open. It is really weird to sleep in a cornfield, hear all the noises and not see a thing except the night sky above you. The next morning I heard noises of people coming my way. I packed up quickly, jumped on my bike and burst out of the cornfield. I'm not sure who was more surprised, them or me. I thought they were coming in to get me!
Venice has a dual-lane causeway to it with a railway on the side of it, but once you get to the end of the causeway, that’s it for motor vehicles or trains. From the train station at the end you can get bus boats, gondolas or walk over the many bridges and narrow footpaths. Venice has the charm and beauty that you expect to find there. It is old, full of waterways and bridges. Buildings back onto canals and open into small squares. Shops everywhere. The hustle and bustle of people moving on foot, boats in the narrow canals, with freight like truck boats you expect in a city. The whole place gets about on the water, and people walk. I spent a couple of days walking around the place, I didn't get onto the bus boats, and I was determined to see Venice from the paths.

Trieste is across the Gulf of Venezia, and sits on the border of Yugoslavia.
I wanted to see a bit of Yugoslavia, as some of my Tassie friend's fathers were Yugoslavs. It took a while to get in as visa's had to be bought at the border. General Tito was the dictator of Yugoslavia. I drove north through Slovenia to the capital Ljubjanna. This was a pretty city with architecture I hadn't seen before. The churches had that Russian look about them with domed roofs. I tried to get into a church to have a look inside, but it was chained shut. A policeman beeped at me from a car and indicated to me to move on. I had learned the Russian word "peeva" for a beer, and this worked well in Yugoslavia. No one spoke English where I went.
I stayed in a camping outside Ljubljanna, and met up with two Dutch girls who were sisters. They bussed to this camping and stayed here for two weeks then bus back to Holland. I walked into the city with them that evening, it was very quiet, and we finished up playing cards back at the camping.
Vienna is a few hours ride north of here. I didn't realise how far to one side of Europe Vienna was. It was raining and grey in Vienna. Maybe it was my mood, but I didn't see why so many people had to come and see Vienna. I drove past the Opera House, looked at a few statues and headed across Austria to Salzburg. Salzburg is what you expect in Austria, fast-flowing mountain streams, white houses with cobblestone streets and Santa Claus about to walk out of the small shops. I did the walk that brought you past the houses of famous composers and had a few beers in the little pubs. The camping ground just outside Salzburg was close enough to walk into the city. I met up with a group of Aussie's on a Top Deck bus tour. It was about 6 guys and 20 girls. They were more than halfway through their 4-week tour of Europe.
The guys were smug and acted like animals, and the Girls ere bitchy and frustrated. So much for the travel brochures I had read on Bus tours back in Aust.
The most amazing bus in this camping was a

German tour. There were about 20 middle to elderly people on this bus. The bus was high with a normal seating arrangement, but under this seating arrangement were lots of small windows and doors. These 20 people and driver and courier all had their own little room, about the size of a coffin. They would get changed and pop into these little doors feet first, to sleep on the bed inside. Each one had its own light. In the morning the driver and courier would get up, set up card tables complete with tablecloths and napkins, and serve breakfast. It seemed that these traveler on an unheard signal all popped into their little rooms, and all got up at the same time, off to the showers etc and be seated for breakfast, like clockwork.
Needless to say, they had an audience; rude Aussie's from the Top Deck bus and me.
I wish I had a spare helmet. I'm sure I could have found a female pillion passenger to come back to the UK with me, on that Top Deck bus!
I travel about 20k through Germany as a short cut back to Austria to get to Innsbruck. (I had no intention of stopping in Germany, I carried a strong inherent prejudice towards Germany.)
Innsbruck brought me close to the Alps, I rode onto Liechtenstein. This is a very small country between Austria and Switzerland. I went to a Catholic Church there. It was Sunday, and I wanted to see what it was like in Germany. Liechtenstein is a green valley between two very high mountain ranges, The towns were small, and it seemed a private place.
Into Switzerland, and uphill into the mountains. I wanted to get across Switzerland but as high up as I could go by road. It was summer and the snow was much further up the mountain peaks. This was a beautiful bike ride. Small roads, farm chalets that were working with cattle sheds underneath and people working in the fields. I got up to a town called Chur. It was on top of the world. I love high places. I came down into the central lakes of Switzerland to Lutzern, with is old wooden buildings, up the busy motorway to the big city of Basel, to cross the border back into France.
I was now in the flat plane of France Miles of flat

and great to travel across on a big bike.
The Bonnie would get the wobbles at about 85 mph then smooth out just over 90 mph. I didn't get it up to 100 mph, 95 was enough. I took a motorway that was a toll, with no speed limit. (I was always worried that I would get pulled over by a cop, as I didn't have a bike license.)
Across the border, into Luxembourg. This would have to be the prettiest country in Europe, It is small, but has a grand city, Luxembourg, and wonderful countryside, with small villages and laneways through picturesque farms. The City of Luxembourg has magnificent stone buildings and gardens, with the Alzette River flowing through it. As a boy I had a good set of stamps from Luxembourg, and was pleased that it turned out to be great. I camped in the country.
I wanted to get to Holland, and headed for the southernmost part, the mountains of Holland. Limburg with its capital Maastricht. I camped in the mountains. These are hills about 300 meters high. They are the only hills in Holland. It was strange to go into town and hear everyone speak Dutch. Even the little kids spoke Dutch to each other. All the signs in Dutch, yep, I was in a Dutch place all right. I enjoyed trying out my Dutch and trying to blend in.
Leveena from Ulverstone was working at a Dutch Christian Holiday camp near Middleburg in Zeeland, is not too far away. I dropped in to visit her. The holiday season was just about over and she was to meet up with Joe (another church person from Ulverstone) and head back to Tassie. She showed me through the camp and served me a southern comfort at the bar. (A bar at a Dutch Christian Camp) She was looking forward to going home. I don't think she travelled much out of Holland but enjoyed her time there.
My money situation was getting critical, I needed to get back to England, to either sell the bike to go home, or find work. I didn't get up north of Holland to see my Auntie's and Uncles, cousins, I thought I would come back via Holland on the way back to Tassie. I didn't have a permit to work in Holland.

I took the Ferry across to Belgium, Boarded the channel ferry to Dover from Zeebrugge and headed back to the UK. It was already August 1977. Eight weeks on the Bonnie, charging from country to country, mainly on the quieter roads, certainly gave me a good look at the many variations of lifestyles in central Europe. I met a number of people, mainly travellers and had

minimal contact with the locals wherever I went.
It was a time of learning to live with myself. To
have days of being on my own, in a foreign country.
For some days I would be stuck in my tent, waiting
for the rain to stop, listening to the BBC World Service
on my short-wave radio. I didn't want to
spend money in Cafés. I bought or swapped
English paperbacks, and read a lot.
There were times of loneliness and moods that
left me disinterested in the place that I was visiting.
I had this in Italy, where I just didn't get interested
in the Place until I was nearly out of Italy, Venice.
At times I would have liked to share where I was,
what I was seeing or doing with old friends from
Tassie. I envied the people I met who were
travelling in small groups in Kombi's or old cars.
However, there are two sides to every coin, I could
go and do what I wanted, whenever I wanted.
My first months in Europe was like this, now I had
to rely on my own resources and live with myself.
I was learning to cope.

London

My first day back in England, I headed off for London. I had hoped to find some work there, but when I was close to London, I decided to head off to a small country Youth Hostel, at Kemsing, about 30 miles out of London.

I was riding down a small country lane that had hedges and stone walls, on either side of it, just before Kemsing, I came over a rise, then, bang, head-on into a small car, that I just didn't see. I flew over the car's roof and landed in the hedge on the side of the road. My ribs, knee and ankle, hurt like blazers. I could remember the shocked face of the old lady, who was driving the car, as I flew over her windscreen.

A big man who lived across the road picked me up and moved my bike to the side of the road. I was OK, but sore. My bike's front fork was bent, and the headlight and flaring were smashed. The big man turned out to be Dave Borrer. Dave wheeled my bike into his garage and invited me into his home. He and his wife and teenage daughter gave me a meal, and later Dave and his daughter took me down to their local pub in Kemsing for a few pints.

Dave knew the elderly lady I hit and sorted out the police report. I stayed the night and got the train into London the next day.

I finished up near Trafalgar Square, in a hostel that took up the basement of what was once a hospital. The upstairs rooms were for vagrants, and the basement downstairs was rented by a guy who had turned it into some sort of hostel. There were a number of large rooms, full of beds. Take any bed that doesn't look used, one pound per night. In the kitchen, I met a number of the tenants. Most of the young people were English, and had various waitress or bar jobs, on the way to a flat or somewhere else to live. I stayed there for a week, while I was looking for work. One night I woke up to the noises of a couple making love in the bed next to me. It was a weird place, but right in the centre of the city and cheap!

As it turned out, I phoned NCR and they were looking for someone with my experience for the

next 3 to 4 months to relieve me while others were off on holidays or training. Great! Start in a few days.
race, he was in the lead for a while. I went into the pits, to be one of his team members for the day, 1 I still enjoyed the bikes.
I spent a lot more time on my own in the evenings. I would stop in various parts of London where work placed me for evening meals and spend much more time in the city of London after work. I went to a few large shows, JC Superstar, some plays in the West End and rock concerts, Jethro Tull, Yes and others.
I went to the Messiah at St Paul's one night after work. St Paul's is about 20 minutes walk from work. I arrived early, went to a pub for a pint and rushed into the cathedral, I was ushered to the front seats to sit through the performance. St Paul's is huge. I was sitting under the dome, looking way up at some people walking up to the high edge of the dome. (You can whisper along to dome to someone over the other side.) Anyway, a small choir performed the Messiah, with a woodwind orchestra. I was busting to get rid of the pint of beer. Stuck in the front I couldn't get up. I just stared at the toilet sign over the other side of the cathedral; the Messiah can take a very long time, till the stand-up chorus at the end.
2 hours drive away. One job a day was about the limit. In the next months I covered a lot of London and realized that in London, you just accept the traffic. If it stops, you stop and wait, if you're wanting to come onto a main road from a side street, people just slow down and let you in, after all, you were sure to stop soon for a wait anyway. Why not let someone else come into your lane and join in on the wait?
The technical office for NCR was in Bonhill Street near the Bank of England. The spare parts department was on the outskirts of North London, and the NCR main office was in West London. It was utter confusion to get anything done. I came under a Cockney workmate, Trevor, who was a true Cockney, born a bred and had a great way of looking at things.

" *The place is a cock-up, it pays Ok and he can run his other businesses while on the jo*b." (I never found out what else he was into, he was pretty secretive.) I used to give the faulty or good computer boards to him, to return to North London, I think they got there?
Friday, after lunch, work finished. Trevor and a few of us would meet at one of the Cockney pubs at lunchtime, have ham sandwiches, a few pints and watch the dancers. The rudest dancer would come on just before 3:00, closing time. Most Fridays, 1 would drive the car home carefully after 3:00, or stay in the city drinking coffees to be able to drive home!
They were a good bunch of guy's at NCR technical and hadn't had a young Aussie to work with them before, I was a bit of a novelty.
I also gained quite a bit of experience work wise, had a free car on the weekends, and was paid well. I could save again.
The first few weekends after I started work, I spent time rebuilding my bike at Dave's place. I got the Bonnie going and got the gauges to work again. It didn't have a headlight and looked sad. I sold it like this to a workmate for 240 pounds. I rode it from Kemsing to his place about 30 miles away. On the way, I picked up a guy in leathers with petrol can and took him to his bike. A fitting way to leave the biking fraternity.
The kindness that Dave gave me over my bike crash was one of those special acts of kindness that
The kindness that Dave gave me over my bike crash, was one of those special acts of kindness that happen unexpectantly on your travels, without any special reason why.
During the week, I left my Imp in a city car park and drove it home in the weekends. It was a 20 minute walk through Walthemstow from the Hostel to the train station to take the tube to work. I got to know Walthemstow well, Keith and Chris (and English clerk) and Tommy and I used to check out the locals.
There were the old pubs, that were straight out of Coronation Street, young people's pubs full of noise,

smoke and strobe lights, and a few rare ones with a piano. I used to like these as some nights the older people would turn up and someone would play the piano and the whole lot would break into song.
Tommy lived with his mum, in one of the council tenement blocks. It was a poor area of Walthemstow, And not far from the hostel. Tommy used to get about on his pushbike and would drop in to visit Keith. Tommy could speak Cockney, he had a great laugh whenever he burst out in a Cockney phrase. It was even more weird when some one would answer him back in Cockney.
We would pile into the Imp and discover the local area. I didn't bump into Aussie's in the part of London, I didn't go to the Aussie areas of Kensignton or Marble Arch, I wanted to be in London with Londoners.
Some weekends the four of us would go off to the coast, or once we got down to Cornwall, that little Imp sure did travel.
I stayed at the Hostel for about 2 months, Keith went to live in a flat near work, and Chris got serious with his girlfriend and up and left to live in Perth, Australia.
I moved into a bedsit in Highgate Hill, near the big Hamstead Heath Park in North London.
This bedsit was a room on the ground floor of a huge old house. It had a double bed, table and chair and a fridge. Cooking was not allowed in the room. The landlady was an old Greek, it was a quiet, large place. There were 3 other bedsits. A Swiss female student on a 4-month English course. An Australian, Micheal Eagle who was working in the UK. for 12 months working at a city law firm. He was here for an investment. He had bought a new Porche had to stay out of Australia for 12 months, so he didn't have to pay tax on it. He was from Sydney, a private school upbringing. Also, an elderly man occupied the 4th bedsit.
This was a big change to my lifestyle. I occasionally bumped into The Swiss girl or Michael and we went out for dinner, but weren't close friends. Michael had a holiday in New Caledonia just before he came to London. He reminded me of

the posters I used to see on the Sydney trains advertising holidays in New Caledonia, I would like to get there one day.
I still had my work Imp and now drove it home every day. My workday would start with a phone call to work and I would be given a job closer to Highstead. Now, I wouldn't get into the technical office for 2 or 3 days at a time. I still met Cockney Trevor Friday lunchtimes in a Cockney pub. I knew the regulars by now and could easily find them. One of the guys was Bernie Toleman, He raced 125cc motor bikes and was in the top 20 in England. I went to Brands Hatch one to see him
I wanted somewhere normal to live, so I headed off to East London to a YMCA at Walthamstow, about 30 minutes by tube from the city centre.
This YMCA turned out to be a hostel for long-term foreign students who attended a polytech across the road. There were a few other long-termers there, who had full-time jobs. Keith, a plump Irishman with black curly hair, booked me in as a student, and I was allowed to stay on 6-week revisable stints at a low student rate.
I had my own room and now lived in a student environment. The hostel had about 60 people living there, mostly from Africa, the Middle East, Pakistan and a few Fiji Indians.
Kieth was a resident who worked at Barclays' Bank; he was in reception to help out while the the caretaker was off for tea. A lucky break for me, as otherwise, I would not have been eligible to stay more than 3 days!
NCR in London was a great job. I was given a small car, a white Hillman Imp. A London AtoZ to find my way around, a toolbox and sent off to fix computers all over London. This meant an easy 2 hours drive to a customer, to find it needed parts another
The area I lived in was one of the select areas of London. At weekends I would walk for miles, through the Heath and its huge parklands.
Hightstead had its own village, with a small village green, little shops and pubs with an old church. The cemetery was famous; Karl Marx is buried there. At the bottom end of the cemetery path is a bronze life-size

statue of Dick Wittington's cat.
On the other side of the Heath is Hampstead. This is a much larger version of Highgate. There is a pub there called the Spaniards. It is a famous London Pub, and I would bump into Aussies there, mainly bus trippers.
Near to where I lived, (at the bottom of the hill) was one of the Irish sections of London. The Irish were right into roading, earthmoving, concrete etc. There was a large contractor's yard that was surrounded by a high barbwire fence. It had security guards at the entrance. I got the job to repair the computer in the payroll office. None of my workmates felt safe going into this Mick's domain. (They feared getting bombed!) So the Aussie got the job. The computer was old and needed a lot of attention, so I went there quite a bit. They told me of an Irish Café where you can get a decent meal nearby. It was in an old area,, just a door at the entrance with a small sign, café above it. Inside there were lots of small tables and a slide at the end of the room that food was passed through. Above the entrance to the kitchen was a shelf with a Black and White TV. (I didn't have one at home, it was nice to watch TV while having diner.) When I first came in, the place quietened a bit and a few people turned to see who I was. I read the menu on the blackboard, ordered a roast, and all went well, I didn't sound like English. I went there quite a bit, as the food was good and cheap. The customers seemed to be regular. Occasionally, people would walk in and quickly go into the back door, next to the toilet door. I watched one lot arrive and must have been staring at them, as when I caught the eye of the blokes at the table across from me, they gave me a stare as if to say, "*What's that do with you!*"
I think the Irish food is good, but I would do better to eat it elsewhere.this area and going to there plays. They were cheap, and of a high standard. Some very interesting plays. The one I enjoyed was Dylan Thomas, " Under Milkwood"
(I now knew who Dylan Thomas was!)
I also got into books; there are some great secondhand bookshops in Highstead.

Living on my own, I found it harder to socialize, to just bump into people and start talking. I suppose my inherent shyness could easily dominate my moods.
It was getting on in the year. Up in the village, I saw kids with stuffed puppets about the same size as them in old baby pushchairs, asking, "penny for the guy"(As a kid, we used to burn the same on our bonfires) There was a bonfire made on the Green, It was lit with a large circle of us holding hands around it.
I enjoyed going to the local folkclub that met in one of the village pubs on Thursday's nights. I was learning to live with myself again, although it would have been nice to bump into Sandy again.
The city of London, is great to walk around. There are so many side streets and interesting places to visit or just be at. I got to know the city area well.
Christmas was not far away and I started to make plans to move on. I could only work 6 months, and by now, had saved enough to travel and my return fare to Australia.
I went to a Christmas carol sing-along in the Village Green, A piano was taken out of one of the pubs and songsheets passed around. Fire lit in the middle of the square and a 100 or so of us, sang carols warming up around the fire.
I finished work just before Christmas. Christmas Eve, I went to the midnight service in the Village church. An old drunk came in and stood next to me, dropped his brown paper-wrapped bottle on the floor, and tried to sing along. Not much of a Christmas for him.
I was invited to Tommy's place in Walthemstow, for Christmas dinner, Keith was there too.
It was a big feast of chicken and ham, everything you would expect at an English Christmas dinner at a workingman's home. We even had crackers to pull, and wore paper hats. After Christmas dinner, we drove off to Cardiff to have a Welsh beer!
New years eve, I went to Trafalgar Square, so did thousands of others. It was one huge party. I joined in with others jumping about in the fountain got

drenched! The trains stop soon after midnight, taxicabs don't want wet people in their cabs, even if you could get one. This was the night even taxi cabs in London were scarce.
So I walked home, about 8 miles, I had seen in the New Year and had seen the light of day by the time I got home. Good it still hadn't snowed in London this winter.
I had written letters to NCR in Athens, Switzerland and Sweden to see if I could get work there. (These were not in the EEC so I could get a permit to work there short term.) Switzerland had replied that if I was in the area, I should drop in and see what we could do. This sounded good to me.
It was time to go to Holland to see my relatives, check out where I was born and see if I could get a Dutch passport or work permit? I left England for Holland, 3 January 1978.

Netherlands

I arrived in Amsterdam by train early evening. It was cold and wet. I found a small hotel near the railway station and squeezed up the narrow, steep stairway to my minute room.

Amsterdam is a place where no one seems to start doing anything until well after 10:00 at night.

I freshened up and walked into the city across the canal bridges and past old Dutch canal-side warehouses that were converted into offices and flats.

The cafes nearest to the Railway station were gaudy with billboards outside, Hash Cakes, Bongs come inside. It was the haven for tourist dope trippers.

I walked up to the Dam, bought Ole Bollen from a caravan and watch a guy and his monkey turn the wheel of an old barrel organ.

Just off the to the left was the Red Light district. I walked through the narrow streets looking at the ladies scantily clad behind the windows. It was like looking in dress shops with live mannequins that didn't quite have the full set of clothes put on them.

Again billboards outside of café's with live fucky etc on them. I went into a coffee shop and watched the world go by. A constant stream of all sorts, passed by the window. I walked around a lot on my first night in Amsterdam, it's that sort of place.

The next day I got in touch with the family. I was a bit hesitant to visit them; I had been in Europe for some time and had not written to them or visited them on my first trip to Holland. I suppose it was, that these were people who we spoke about while I was growing up, but they were only names to me.

I first went to visit Mum's sister, Tante Eef and Om Jan in Huizen an old fishing village now almost a suburb of Amsterdam. Their daughter Nellie was still living at home. I stayed in the room where my Opa lived in it before he died, it still had a lot of his furniture in it.

Om Jan worked in Lellistad, a new city that was built on recently reclaimed land. He worked in a factory that made road signs for most of Europe.

My Dutch was reasonably good so I could chat pretty well with them. I warmed up to these two and

they did their best to make me feel at home. Nellie had a boyfriend, Johan, who was a bit of a smart-ass. I went to the local krug, (pub) with him and met some of his friends. It was weird, they were trying to practice their English on me and thought it was hilarious, silly thing about it was that I was speaking Dutch to them all the time. One of the guys was in the army. He had shoulder-length hair (so did I) and came home in the weekends. He had been out on a bivouac in the Dutch forest where they had to cook their food on open fires and sleep in makeshift tents. Sounded like a Boy Scout army to me. Nellie was pregnant and soon to marry Johan.

Om Jan, loved to drink Junever, Dutch Gin. He would put a litre bottle next to the leg of his coffee table pour it into a small glass and throw it back, and smile a contented smile. I joined him and got a taste for the stuff too. I brought a bottle home one night and we finished it there and then.

Tante Eef was a taller version of my Mum, and had a very similar character, she used to say that I had the same walk as Mum.

Around the corner lived her brother, also Jan. He was an older, balder, fatter version of me. A quiet hen-pecked man, who didn't have much of an opinion about anything. His wife did though!

A few streets away live a brother of Dad's I had never heard about. Gerret van Garderen, his wife was from Huizen. I knocked on his door, and a small slide slid back in the door, this van Garderen face peered at me with those piercing blue eyes, "*ya!*"

He welcomed me in, and his wife, a tall woman who spoke at an incredibly fast pace, questioned me continuously, as news from the van Garderen's in Australia was scarce news to them.

Gerret wanted to take me to all the van Garderen places of interest. We drove around in his little green car, which he called the koffee mollen. The farm where Dad was born Eemnes, the land where the Diujs lived, (these were Dad's maternal lineage, many generations of gamekeepers for the royal family) and the cemetery where his Mum and Dad

and quite a few of his brothers and sister were. It was amusing walking through this cemetery with him. He and his stern face, walking past graves pointing, "*the baker, the elder, the grocer, etc.*
"
Poor guy, he couldn't find the family grave, we went home to drink a gin instead. He kept his gin locked in a glass cupboard. Took out a small key, unlocked the door, poured a small glass each, then placed the bottle back in the cupboard and locked the glass door, very ceremoniously!
I visited Dad's next brother, Naardus in Laren. He lived a few houses away from where Mum and Dad lived in Laren, where I was born. His wife, Tante Rietje is catholic, so at the meal table we all did the Hail Mary thing and crossed our chests. His son. Ronnie, about my age, was living at home and his oldest son had just married and was living over the back fence in another council house. Naardus and Ronnie worked at the Philips factory in nearby Hilversum. Dad worked in this factory before he left for Tasmania. I went to an open day at the factory and was taken on a tour, to see the production of electrical components. Had Mum and Dad not left Holland, I wonder if the three sons would have finished up here too?
I walked past the house I was born in, 3 Elbow Street and looked up at the small bedroom window where I started, with a yelp!
Ronnie was about to go into the Dutch army for national service. He was looking forward to it as he hoped to get his heavy vehicle license and become a lorry driver. His main interests were his mates, soccer and once he had gone to Yugoslavia for a week's holiday. Yugoslavia was the Mecca for the Dutch for package holidays. He had no desire to look beyond Holland. I mentioned Australia a few times, but he had no interest beyond Holland. I suppose he knew what he wanted.
I met one of Dad's older brother's sons who had grown up in South Africa. He and his wife were living back in Holland, and had been for some time. He spoke a lot about life in South Africa and it sounded a lot like the Aussie lifestyle, warmth,

bar-b-ques, real summers and lots of bush and open spaces. He was a very interesting cousin.
There was dad's younger brother, Cor who lived in Narden, the Star of Holland. This is an old fortified island about half a kilometer across, now landlocked due to the sea disappearing. At one time the Spanish sailed up to Narden and shot heaps of canon balls into the small city. Today, the church steeple and some of the houses have well-polished cannon balls embedded in the walls. These are a real pride and joy to the residents. Cor and his wife had lived in Narden for some time. (it's only about half an hour from Laren) It's a beautiful little place; I walked through as much of it as I could.
Oom Cor was brought up by his Mum's brother, Oom William. He was one of the last Diujs to work as a gamekeeper. The story has it that he didn't get on with his wife, so they lived in the same house but didn't talk to each other for fifteen years.
Eventually during the depression he moved out and lived in the forest in a hole in the ground. I had an old photo of a little cottage by a canal where he finished up. Apparently, he drowned one night as he went to the canal to wash himself. Oom Cor had good words for this uncle and when I was interested, he got out his photo album and showed me pictures of him. One, with him, posed next to a dead deer with his long gun, another of him in the front seat of a bi-plane. (He was the first to fly in his district) I reckoned that he was a family treasure!
The reluctance I had to dig up my family in Holland disappeared and I enjoyed talking to these people who were once only names in conversations. Dad was the second youngest of 16. I had now met another three of his brothers, and Mum's sister and brother. Yep! They were family and welcomed me as such, too!
I also appreciated the difficulties of emigrating that Mum and Dad had and were living through.
I tried to see if I could get residency and a work permit in Holland. That was easy, I could, if I was prepared to go straight into the army, as I was the third son and national service was compulsory.
I moved on.

I took a train to Switzerland, to drop in at NCR and see if that job was still open for me. I had had a good couple of weeks in the Netherlands and now wanted to see the mountains again!

Switzerland

I arrived at Zurich train station early in the morning, mid-January. It was winter, snow everywhere, and I looked out the window to spot a gnome.

I stayed in a hotel in the old city area of Zurich, Huge high double bed with a thick feather-down cover. It was like sleeping between two mattresses.

I started work at NCR the next day, they had found a bedsit nearby in the home of an elderly couple. I was given a small car, (Opel station wagon) and had a job installing new computers and repairing computer circuit boards at the technical centre.

The Swiss franc had increased to nearly double the USA dollar. This meant that NCR computers were two for the price of one. It was a salesman's dream. Many businesses were buying two computers, one just for backup.

I was a bit of a novelty as no one had come to Switzerland to work for a short term before. It was a good job, I learnt a lot and at the end of my term, they were very pleased with what I had done.

Living in Zurich, working during the weekdays, 7:30 to 5:30, (the Swiss love to work!) put me back into a very regular life again.

My bedsit was basic, the older Swiss couple were retired and invited me for breakfast every Friday morning, I couldn't converse with them much, as Swiss German was difficult for me. I didn't have any cooking facilities or laundry. This was the case wherever I lived. I rarely cooked a meal while I was living in bedsits and usually had a breakfast of bread and jam. Zurich didn't have launderettes, only dry cleaners. I used to sneak into a hostel in the city and pretend I lived there to use their washing machine and dryers. It worked for a while, until I got found out, and booted out of the place.

In the evenings during the week days, I would read a lot; I joined the library and had access to English novels.

At the weekends, I walked a lot. Behind my home was a forest. I walked through it to the old city centre many times. It had huge pine trees and steep

hills. Most of the time I was there, this forest was covered in snow.

Zurich, sits on the side of a long, narrow lake, and has a fast river running through it to the lake. It has many beautiful old buildings and churches, and old bridges crossing the river. The Banks are splendid buildings as Zurich is the financial centre of Switzerland. The bankers are called the gnomes of Zurich.

Some weekends I would drive to the mountain resorts in other parts of Switzerland, The mountain valleys all seem to have huge Swiss farm houses in the chalet style you would expect to see in Switzerland. Yes, the cows roam about in the mountains with huge brass cowbells around their necks.

I walked a lot of the forest pathways near Zurich. One thing you could count on was a coffee at the end of any well-known path. One Sunday morning, I remember especially, I had been walking up a steep hill under pine trees covered in snow. I heard a church bell ring in the valley. Through a clearing in the trees I could see this small church way below in the valley. I was the only one on the path, It was peaceful, beautiful, and very Swiss.

The Swiss people I met were mainly my work mates. Every Thursday we would go to a café after work and have a few drinks and eat painted hard-boiled eggs. The shells were always painted in many bright colours.

Roland Egli was a bit older than I was, and I worked with him most of the time. He had to go away on a national service camp for 3 weeks, while I was there.

From 21 to 30, all young Swiss men go to national service camps for 3 weeks a year. Each has a machine gun and ammunition in storage at home. The whole country can be mobilized in a matter of minutes. Strangely, it is very rare that these guns are used illegally.

I used to meet up with some English people in an English pub in the old city, play darts and talk about England.

Living in a foreign-speaking country, and working the

hours I did, did not give me much of a chance to meet other travelling people. I missed that.
A Dutchman visited us at work one day. He was working on a new project for NCR to develop a way so that computers could communicate with each other globally. It was a very new field using modems. He invited me to join his team in Holland and would arrange work permits, so I would not be called to national service. It sounded great, but I wanted to get back into travelling mode. I rarely let a chance go by, in hindsight; it would have been a great career move. Early stages of the development of the internet.
I saved quite a bit in Zurich, and lived a fairly quiet life, got through the winter and booked me on a 2-week bus tour from London to Marrakech and back.
I flew to London, and dropped into NCR to see if there was any relieving work anywhere in the UK after I got back from the bus tour. There were 6 to 8 weeks of work in Jersey, Channel Islands.

Bus to Morocco

I came across Sunshine Tours from an ad in an English newspaper in Zurich. Morocco 15 days, coach tour. The price was right, it seemed a good idea.

12 of us met at a small bus depot near Kings Cross station in London. The Bus was a shorter version of an old school bus. About a 20 seater, green, with the motor in the front. Kees, a tall, blonde Australian, about 30, was our driver, and Barry, a nervous overweight Englishman, our courier.

On the way to Dover, Barry read the itinerary of the trip; we looked quizzically at each other, and silently wondered what we were in for.

It was on the ferry across the Channel to France that we got to know each other. There were 3 women and I was one of the 7 men. Our ages ranged from 19 to the early sixties. A couple of Yanks, three Aussies, and English. We were a mixture of oddballs on an obscure bus tour to Marrakech. This trip needed a sense of humour!

The idea was to get down to Morocco quickly, spend a week driving around there and head back to London, via Paris.

Our first night's stop was at a small French Town south of Rouen. We set up tents, and walked to a nearby castle that we were told, had a unique staircase. We stood in the car park and tried to figure out where this staircase would be. We complained to each other about the entrance fee and decided to walk away, past a church that had a plaque about Joan of Arc on the door to a small Cafe. It seems that European culture was not on the agenda in anybody's mind for this trip!

I shared a tent with an English antiquarian bookbinder, a nice bloke mid-thirties; he wanted to find a bargain in Morocco.

We seemed to drive endlessly for hours through France and Spain. I was in a world of rabbits, occasionally looking out the window at paddocks wondering where the rabbits were. Yep, head about them in a book,I was reading Watersip Downs.

(I had ridden a lot of this road before on my Trumpy.)

We drove through Madrid, down wide avenues, with Barry reading some travel guides on Madrid through the mike.
South of Madrid is the ancient capital, Toledo. Toledo is great. It is a city on top of a hill with a river flowing almost around the base of the hill. Most of the city walls are still there. Inside are narrow streets and a cathedral. We found a taverna and sampled the local produce, wine, cheese olives and cabana.
We stopped at Grenada in the south. Grenada has an impressive castle called the Alhambra. The Moors who lived in the region for many years under Muslim rule built it. This castle is full of ornate gardens, fountains, and oriental architecture. From the walls, you can look across the valley to the caves that were famous for Gypsy dwellers. Beyond Grenada are mountain ranges with peaks covered in snow. Spain has it plains, but we saw a very mountainous countryside from our bus window.
Algeciras is at the bottom of Spain. Across the bay you can see the huge rock of Gibraltar. Algeciras is the port to catch a ferry to Ceuta, a Spanish town on the northern tip of Morocco. The ferries only went from Algeciras to Ceuta. No ferries to Gibraltar or Morocco as the Spanish were not pleased with these two counties.
Barry, again read to us over the mike about highlights in Algeciras,
Our youngest passenger left us there, He decided to travel through Spain back to the UK.
I became used to the bus tour way of travelling. It's mindless and you have no say in the tour. All you need to do is make sure you get on the bus when everybody else does.
It doesn't take long to ferry to Ceuta, you can see across the straight of Gibraltar to the African continent on a clear day!
At Ceuta, Kees hid many cartons of Johnnie Walker Scotch behind the back seat, and told us to act cool as we went through the Moroccan border. We did!
Kees had taken a few tours to Morocco. He had

been a courier on the 3-month bus trips from Katmandu to London, later driven a few tours. he now enjoyed the shorter drives to Morocco.
Our first stop in Morocco was the ruins of Volubilis, a Roman city. There was still so much intact, mosaics on the floors and streets with bits of the colonnades still upright. Even a brothel with a huge penis caved in the doorway. We camped nearby. Moroccans came by to sell us artifacts, usually young boys, calling out Senor, Monsieur, and Mister, as soon as you answer they would hassle you in your language. One kid was selling ancient coins; they had 1342 on them. It turned out they were today's coins as the Moslem coins date back to Mohammed in the sixth century as the start of their calendar.
We saw many veiled women and men with donkeys wearing cloaks and sandals. Traffic on the roads were mainly old trucks and buses, crowded with goods and people hanging off them.
Fez was a real eye-opener! It has an ancient Madina, (city centre) The alley ways too narrow for cars, and trucks. Donkeys charged through these narrow streets laden with bags of stuff. Some bloke behind them shouting, "*attention, attention*" as these things bolted towards you. The shops were holes in the wall, people making all sorts of handicrafts, and other stalls selling produce. One interesting shop sold cosmetics, but raw, in stones, and pastes that you mix and ground yourself.
We found the die pits where men tread cloth and leather in pits about a meter round. There were dozens of these pits next to each other. It looked like a miserable place to work. The whole place was biblical.
Eventually, we finished up at a carpet warehouse. Hundreds or carpets lying on the floor, hanging on the walls, it really showed the most beautiful handy work.
I gave in, I bought a 300 UK Pound carpet, put my Tassie address on it and said goodbye to it! Kees loaned me 100 pounds to buy it. (This was my savings to buy a ticket back to Aussie) Still, it was a nice carpet, and at the time I seemed to think 1

needed a carpet.
Going for a pee in the public toilet in Fez was an education. My Bookbinder mate and I stood up and peed against the wall and in walked two Moroccans, who squatted next to us to pee. Poor buggers, we nearly peed on them, it is most disconcerting to be peeing away and men squat on either side of you to pee.
We headed over the Atlas Mountains into the fringes of the desert. Coming down the mountain road towards the desert we saw a vast expanse of dryness.
The mountain range looked burnt and dry. We saw nomadic Bedouin tents with herds of goats and camels, At one point Kees stopped the bus, and we got out to sit on the edge of a cliff and stare out into the dry vastness. We were still hundreds of miles away from the Sahara, but this was what I expected to see in a dessert, it was mesmerizing.
We followed a river, which had cut deep into the earth. On either side of it were 100-ft cliffs, baron land above, yet inside this trench, lush date palm trees and various crops. Houses were built into the cliff bases, and cattle, and camels grazing at the water edge.
We stayed the night at a place called Meski Oasis.
It was a small lake in one of these trench valleys, that was surrounded by palms and the waters edge thick with reeds. The campsite was at the side of a steam that fed this little lake. The stream source came from out of the earth, facing the Atlas Mountains.
We went through the massive Todra and Dades gorge passes, to get back across the Atlas to get to Marrakech. This gorge has a small stream running through it, and the bus drove over the river stones, in the stream heading upstream, to get through the gorge.
In a larger area of the gorge was a small-fortified village that seemed to have been there for centuries. The people here were Berbers. Beautiful women, and proud to show their femininity. They wore blue and purple robes and headgear.
Well-polished brass necklaces, and earrings. These women did not wear a veil; the men wore pyjamas, headgear and a belt with a curved knife. I don't

think it was to show off to the tourists, as there weren't many. It was a true Berber region.
Marrakech is a huge ancient, market city. The main place in the city is the market; it has trucks, wagons, donkeys and camels all over the place. You see all types of nomadic races. Men were tall and pitch black, in white robes, tending to their camels. There were acrobats, jugglers, musicians, and water sellers in ornate clothing and heaps of boys trying to sell antiques.
We stayed in a hotel that had its heyday in the 1930's; it was run down and decadent but suited the marketplace so well. Kees offloaded his Johnnie Walker there, that sold well. Having a couple of nights to stay in one place gave us time to venture off and find coffee cafe's and mint teahouses. I found some beautiful amber (orange petrified wood) necklaces and bought one for Janet.
Watching the events in the market alone could easily take up the day. The camels were nasty and snap at you if you get too close, so do the owners. The Moslem way of life with veiled women and mosques full of praying faithful men, hearing the minarets loudspeakers calling to worship 5 times a day, and the clothing of the men, made it hard to believe that a few hours north, across the straight was Europe.
We all slept in one huge room, with a bathroom to one side, and two noisy fans rattling above us. The hotel had a lounge low sofas and oriental décor,
It was like the movie, Casablanca.
We travelled to the Coast, Casablanca and north along the Atlantic coast to Tangiers. At Tangiers, we were to catch a ferry across straight to Gibraltar.
Unfortunately, Barry had gotten things wrong and we missed out on going to Gibraltar. We stayed in another run-down hotel in Tangiers and made the best of it. Tangiers had its own Medina and it was a nice farewell evening to Morocco. (I bought a coarse woven camel hair blanket this time!)
Back to Ceuta, across to Algeciras by ferry and then off to Seville. This is where you buy Spanish leather

and Havey's Bristol Cream sherry. Harvey's was closed On the day we arrived, as this was the day they had off each week. (Barry found that out after we arrived at a closed building featured in his travel guide.) The ladies took off in desperation to find Spanish shoes and handbags; A few of us found a taverna and ate Spanish roast chicken. We had 3 hours in Seville, I walked back to where the bus was parked and fell asleep on a lawn about 50 meters in front of the bus.

I woke up, got back into the bus, to receive heaps of abuse. Everyone was cranky as the Sherry place was shut and no one could find a shoe shop! They had been waiting for about an hour for me. Kees was ready to take off and leave me there! I told them I went to sleep and anyone looking out of the front bus window would see me, but this did not make peace.

We stayed the night at Salamaca. This is on an old inland crossroads town, with dusty streets, crumbled cathedral, and a fast river running through it. A place where you expect a rebel army to ride through on horseback.

From here on, there was a strong desire to get back to London. Barry got the sulks, and Kees became quiet. Kees decided to get us to Paris to show off some of the sites to make up for missing out on Gibraltar. That perked us up a bit.

Paris does not let anyone down. It is one of Europe's showpieces. We walked to the Eiffel Tower, drank coffee on the Champs Elysees and missed out on the Louvre as it was closed on this day of the week.

Barry tried to navigate us to Napoleon Memorial Gardens and the Bastille but got us lost.

We finished up at Sacre Cour, a white cathedral on Monte Matre. That was just as nice, as we could sit down and watch the artist paint portraits in the small square.

We stayed the night in a camping, about 20 miles out of Paris. Kees didn't want to take us into Paris for the evening, and there were no trains nearby.

Back in London, we parted with short polite goods byes and all seemed pleased to have the trip behind

us. I gave Kees the 100 pounds for the carpet and wondered if I would ever see the carpet again.
Travelling on a bus trip is a very self-absorbing way to travel. You search for banal amusement in things you see, or criticisms you make with other passengers. You can even choose to ignore the world outside the bus and go along with the flow. Contact with the people and culture is at a bare minimum, usually haggling over prices!
We got on with each other reasonably well during the trip. (After all, it was a budget trip, with shared meal expenses, tenting and cheap hotels when available.)
We went to places off the beaten track and certainly did see a lot of Morocco. I enjoyed the 2 weeks of being carried along on a holiday.
Kees told me that the inside word for bus tour passengers was "*planks*". You unload them, and then stack them back in again when you move on! I think we were a mixture of green and old dried wooden planks!

Channel Islands

Jersey to me was something you wore when it was cold, or a brown cow with a big udder.

I had heard of the Channel Islands when we sat on a hill in the lakes district and stared out across the sea to the Isle of Man. These islands just off the coast of Brittany, were another British tax haven. I was intrigued, then, to visit these islands.

When I returned to London, I dropped into NCR to see if I could pick up some relieving technical work again. I was offered a couple of months in Jersey.

I flew into Jersey. The airport is small, just inland from a long golden sandy beach with sand dunes.

I caught the shuttle bus into St Hellier and booked into a small hotel at the quay.

Jersey from the air is small, on land it is still small, 8 miles by 5 miles and lots of narrow roads crisscrossing it with tiny villages dotted along the coast and some inland. The capital is St Helliers, a squashed-up town with a curved bay, and old stone walled quay that fishing and pleasure craft huddle into. In the middle of the curved bay is a huge high-walled castle, Elizabeth Castle, built on rock. Only at a low tide can you walk out to the castle along a concrete causeway. The tides are 18 to 20 ft. Boats are either afloat in the quay with easy access by walking straight off the side of the quay wall, or at low tide, sitting on the mud 20 ft down with no water in sight.

Jersey's ancestry is fiercely independent. As I was told many times, Jersey still claims mainland Britain as theirs.

Until World War two, the language of Jersey was a Patios, a mixture of French and Celtic. Most of the villages, streets and houses have French or Patois names. Next to Elizabeth castle is a high rock on it own in the sea with a very small chapel built on it. In the 13th century, Saint Hellier lived on that desolate rock for some years.

Jersey has its own currency and an income tax of 5% to cover the national health.

There are a number of small banks, hospitality

businesses, shops and a very busy postage stamp centre.
As far as industry goes, tourism is it, although there was a milk and cheese factory, and a surprising amount of farming.
There were three NCR people working there and one guy in Guernsey about 15 miles across the sea. There was various cash registers spread out over the island in small shops and pubs, and the banks in St Hellier had small computers and old mechanical ledger machines. I was given a small Ford Escort van and drove over most of the island each day repairing ancient cash registers. It was a great job and a nice way to get to know Jersey and all its hidden spots.
Driving a car in Jersey is a careful process. The the speed limit on the whole island is 30 miles per hour. The roads that cross the island are very narrow, that if you did meet a bus or lorry, you pulled hard to the side of the road and let it squeeze by.
In the small villages and St Hellier, parking is almost impossible, and parking wardens are very fast at writing out tickets. I spent an hour stuck in the car park lift with two other men and a lady one day. Apparently, this was the third time she had been stuck in this lift and took it quite calmly. It was a multistory car park on the edge of the quay. (The only one in town, and a place usually to find a park)
Back at work, they laughed, as it was a common occurrence and considered lucky if you got out of the lift at all.
Jersey was that sort of place, nothing was really taken seriously. Mary Ann was the local beer and strong, takeaway fish and chips with salt and vinegar was the national dish.
I moved out of the hotel to a bed-sit in an old farmhouse Beauvoir on the hill Mont Couchon overlooking the bay onto
Elizabeth castle. I had an upstairs room with the usual bed, table and a hand basin. No cooking in the rooms!
I tried toasting some cheese and bacon on a

small open toaster one night. I burnt the toast and stank the house out with burnt bacon smells. The landlady was nice about it. Asked if I smelted the pig that fell into the fire last night?
The walk along the country lane past paddocks, down the hill to the bay, and past a few pubs into the town was a pleasant hour's walk. A lot longer when I used to walk home, as the pubs were welcoming and fish and chip shops provided the evening meal on the homeward stroll.
I didn't bump into any Aussies or Kiwi's while in Jersey. The holiday season was yet to start, so most of the people I met were British people working there or locals. All friendly, but no real mates.
For a few weeks, the youngest guy at work and I used to go out to his favourite haunts after work. He was Jersey-born, that allowed him to buy a house and land, he had married a couple of years earlier to a local Jersey girl. To him, England was the mainland and a place where the mailboat came from and you went too to attend Uni. or polytech. I could relate to that, as Tasmanians referred to the rest of Australia as the mainland too! (It was because of his 6 weeks' holidays in he mainland, that I had work in Jersey)
He told me about places with ancient stones in paddocks that date back to pre-historic times like Stonehenge.
Also about a medieval village La Houge Bie between Jersey and France, now underwater, which can only be reached in extreme low tides, when you charge out on a motorbike with the receding tide to the ruins that remain, then turn back to beat the tide. He had seen it with some friends a few years back and his father got there on horseback!
Until the 1960's there were no police in Jersey. The island was divided up into parishes. Each parish had its parish hall that dispensed out its own justice. Voluntary men called Senteneers policed these parishes. These Senteneers could charge you and you would appear at the local parish hall before the Beak to get fined. Most of the strife was related to traffic offences or drinking under age. Serious crimes were dealt with by English police who came across for the event.

In the weekends I used to go to either the small coves for a swim in the freezing English Channel or sleep in the sand dunes of St Ouen Bay. I was into saving for another few months touring of the Continent with my old Tassie workmate, Rob Oates, so I became a careful local for a couple of months I was there and did save a bit.

Occasionally, I would fly to Guernsey to repair cash registers and accounting machines. Harold, the guy in Guernsey had a lump removed from his chin, it turned out to be cancerous and was whisked away to England for a few weeks of cancer treatment. I was needed back in Jersey too, as they were short-staffed.

The flight from Jersey to Guernsey is about 15 minutes, at elevation 1,000 ft in a small plane called a Trilander. These were like a car, with bench seats and doors down each side of the plane. You opened the door and got in like getting into a car. Then the pilot would close the door behind you and lock it from the outside. The flight back from Guernsey to Jersey was at 2,000 ft. It was a very picturesque fight as Guernsey is about half the size of Jersey, a slower, not so touristy place. With lots of tomatoes greenhouses, a fishing industry, cows, and famous Guernsey jumpers. The main town there is St Peters port. It's much smaller than St Hellier; the buildings are made out of local brown stone. With a large quay in front of the town. Guernsey also had huge tidal differences. St Peter's Port was a popular yachties haven for both the British and French.

The coastline around Guernsey is rocky and full of reefs, with hardly any beaches. The highest point is a sea cliff face to the other side of St Peter's port. From there you can look down at the swirling sea as the tides torment the water, and rocks break the waves.

In the distance, you could see the small hilly island of Sark. For years, Sark had its own Baroness, who kept the island private. She held control of her little island during the occupation and died only recently. The Island has no vehicles, three pubs and some lovely little guesthouses in secluded bays. I

spent a day there once walking from pub to pub, servicing the cash registers.
I used to stay in a guesthouse, run by a family with a lovely daughter. She used to fatten me up with huge breakfasts, and we had the odd beers in the evening in front of their large open fire in the lounge. The daughter had a local boyfriend.
There was a pub near the waterfront on the edge of St Peter's port, which was my favourite. It had an old piano and every night that I went there, a guy in his forties would get up and play it. He would play old favourites, blues and honky tonk. Then sit back at the bar and continues drinking his beer. One night his dad came in and did the same, only he played old war songs that livened up the pub with everyone singing.
Flying back to Jersey, you can see concrete World War Two bunkers on the tops of cliffs on both islands.
The Germans occupied these islands; it was to be their stepping stone to Britain. Jersey has a huge underground hospital that was to take care of the casualties. There is a holiday on 5th. May, "Liberation Day"!
While I was there, the Queen came to Jersey, onboard her yacht, Britannia, with some of her kids. It was moored in the bay, just off Elizabeth Castle. This caused quite a commotion, as her title in the Channels Islands is the "Her Majesty the Duke". Jersey still strongly adheres to their Norman sovereignty. There was a gala event for 600 onboard, this caused the usual social bitterness as who could attend or not. The Queen had just completed her first 25 years of reign.
I took the French hydrofoil to St Malo. (These were the same as the fast hydrofoil ferries on Sydney harbour.) This ancient, walled coastal town has all the best that France can offer. It was a great day out and a regular trip for most locals.
It was not unusual to hear French radio stations as you walked by cottages in Jersey. French TV radio and spoken French was very common.
My time in Jersey stretched out to nearly 3 months. I enjoyed many walks and living in an English place. Three months of living in a bedsit, working

weekdays, and getting about on weekends, didn't really give me a steady social life. I missed the opportunity to drop into a flat and spend time with people I had a history with, and to share time with. I had my second birthday away, and I suppose I was questioning why I was living away from family and people I knew. I read quite a bit while in Jersey, and through the letters I received from Friends and family in Tassie, people's lives were moving on there too! I looked forward to seeing a bit of the Continent with some old friends.
I had agreed to meet Rob Oates and his girlfriend, Joan at San Sebastian Spain early in August. I bought a Renault 10 in Jersey for two hundred pounds, said farewell to my workmates and packed the car for a few months travel on the Continent, maybe even get as far as Greece. I took the car Ferry to St Malo, and looked back at Jersey as it shrank even more in size, it's a place I felt sure 1 would see again.

Me and Oates 'n' Joan

The Renault wouldn't start. Luckily I was one of the last to drive off the ferry into France. The ferry guys looked at me and sighed. They pushed it, I rolled down the ramp, great, and it started as I rolled out off the ship!

Back on a familiar road to San Sebastian, I drove without stopping much on the way.

I met Rob and Joan outside the main post office. Rob and Joan arrived in Europe about 2 weeks earlier. They stayed a few days in London and then spent 7 days on their British rail pass-off to Cornwall and Scotland. They hitched from Calais to San Sebastian. Mostly rides were in trucks and stopped in some small villages overnight on the way. It was great to see them and soon we were on our way to Madrid.

We fitted into the Renault OK, put out tents and cooking gear on the roof rack, and looked like gypsies.

I enjoyed travelling through places with old friends; Madrid, Toledo, Salamanca cafes and cheap out of the way restaurants took our money.

We camped at a large lake just outside of Portugal; it feed the large Portuguese river, Duoro. The bridge across the river into Portugal was a ruin. I think it was blown up in the revolution many years before.

We found a way into Portugal and made our way through the dry, poor country hills down to the coast to Oporto. The capital of Port!

Along the river at Oporto are lots of Port warehouses, walking distances between them. The three of us tagged onto tours visiting these and after free samples of 5 10 15 year old port at a few warehouses we rested against one of the fences and fell asleep in the hot afternoon sun. I liked Oporto.

We wanted to find Matheus a popular Portuguese Rose wine in Tasmania. Apparently the vineyards are about 80 miles inland. We bought a bottle instead!

Between Oporto and Lisbon the capital is a coastal fishing town, Figueira de Foz. We set-up camp with heaps of other free loader just over the

hill from a large international campsite. We stayed here for nearly a week. It was a nice beach with local fisherman rowing their brightly painted wooden open boats out to sea off the beach. They then set a long net and rowed back into shore. Then the locals and a whole lot of tourists would pull on the ropes and drag the net onto the beach. Most times a good number of sardines would be caught. Ladies would gather these and place them in wide cane baskets and walk through the market area, basket on top of their heads, shouting, "sadinas, sardinas". A few of the Tavernas would fry these sardines whole, in olive oil and sell them hot, between small bread loaves. We liked the place and also liked the idea of being in the same place for a while.

We went to a Bullfight. In Portugal, the bull is not killed; it gets a hard time, but lives to make many more bulls. The matadors are on horseback and ride around the bulls, leaning over to push small barbed knives into the neck of the bull. These knives have coloured ribbons on them. It's a great skill in horsemanship! With lots of Ole's from the crowd. The Bullring was small and a very local event. Not many tourists in sight at this bullfight! It was a great way to soak up warm wine.

Joan and Rob went down to Lisbon for a couple of days, and I bummed around the beach eating more sardinas.

We headed down to the Algarve, the southern coast of Portugal, the holiday Mecca for northern Europeans. This drive took us through forests of Aussie gum trees, and past acres of cultivated trees that had their bark neatly cut from them. We though it might be cork trees, but never bothered to ask. The Algarve was as the travel pictures showed, Beaches full of bare bums and perky tits on show! Camp grounds full, and souvenir shops everywhere.

German seemed to be the national language. It's a pretty coastline with rolling surf.

We moved on to the other side of Faro and camped at an isolated fishing village. It was quiet, local and had a few taverna's that served roasted

chicken.
A short walk from the campground was a ramshackle group of boathouses next to a slipway. Inside were wooden fishing boats about 16 to 20 feet in length in various stages of construction. These were planked boats, heavy and built for serious sea work. It felt like I was peering into a boat building outfit form the 18 hundreds, no sign of anything modern.
The builder craftsmen were away, probably on holidays or fishing.
After a few days in the area we moved on to Algerciras via Cadiz the ancient southern Spanish port that played such a great part in the conquering of the New World.
The lure of the Rock grew on us as we looked across the bay at it towering above anything near it. We garaged the car at the hotel where were staying at and took the ferry to Tangiers to get to Gibraltar. (The boarder between Spain and GIB was still closed)
I had known Rob Oates for some years by now. He and I worked at NCR in Hobart. We used to get on well and one year made our way up to Cairns by train. He was a true Tasmanian, and lived near Hobart up the Cascade Valley past the brewery. His family had worked at the brewery for years. Rob was an independent person, women attracted to him like a magnet, and he saw this as a matter of course. He wasn't passionate about anything, and in many respects very cautious. At times it was painful to get him to do anything out of the way, or adventurous. I think this is why we got on well, as I would drive him to his limits. Rob knew my Tassie flat mates well, and even tried to set me up with a double date a few times. He saved for his trip to Europe by being a contract Rotary Hoe person around southern Hobart. Before I left for Europe I worked with him a few Saturdays, I hated it, shoveling dirt all day!
Nice thing about travelling with Oates is that we knew each other well enough, to say what we like, and could avoid each other for periods of time. That's why we split for a few days and met up again later somewhere down the road.

Joan had been going out with Rob for nearly a couple of years by now. He met her while fixing something at the Bank. Joan had been married; she was quiet and reserved. She loved reading and was mostly at peace with herself. She was good company on the trip, There didn't seem to be much romance between Rob and Joan, I think they were now just good friends. I enjoyed times with Joan; she had a grasp on life that I didn't understand, a knowledge that her life experiences had taught her, which I was too naive to contemplate. I think she enjoyed my brazen attitude, to stretch herself and do and go where ever you felt.

We crossed to Tangiers, stayed in the old grand hotel and wandered through the medina. Rob wanted to find a hashish parlour. He found one with Joan, I met them there by accident. Rod had met a guy in the medina who was too pleased to show him where to go. When they got to this café, Rob brought a pipe, had a puff, and his new found friend passed it around the café, this was Moroccan hospitality. Rob bought a number of pipes, then got angry at being taken in. I walked in by this time, purely by accident; I wanted a cup of mint tea. I had a puff on the café communal pipe, coughed and spluttered, and Joan thought it was it good time to leave, as the local hospitality was becoming very persistent!

Gibraltar lived up to what we had expected. It was British, had fish n chips, red post boxes with E2R on them and the union Jack flying from flag poles. We walked up the rock to the look out, to be met by red bum apes, It was said that when they leave the rock, so will the British! The Rock has huge caves inside it. One cave is a cathedral. People were practicing for a classical concert, The echo and ambience was superb. From the top of the rock you could look down the steep side to the small bays and water reservoirs. The steep side was concerted, and this caught the rainwater that supplied the colony.

We could see the airstrip, parallel to the boarder on the flat land. A deep trench cut across the road to Gibraltar and barbwire strung along it. It looked

very convincing and permanent.
Gibraltar's history is naval and countless sieges by invading navies. We read about these in the museum and visited the small naval graveyard. There is also a fine marina. Rob met an English guy on a yacht who was staying there for a few days. We had wine on board and felt aquatic, sitting on the aft deck in amongst expensive yachts. We stayed couple of days on this British outpost. Kees was right about the place when he talked about it on the Moroccan bus trip.
Back at Algerciras we pilled into the Renault and headed up the coast to Malaga, Costa del Sol. Holiday beaches for the Pommies. It's a large coastal city, full of long beachside promenades, lined with cafes, and union jacks flying on small flag poles out side restaurants. They knew who there customers where. This was the destination for cheap, English package holidays, complete with donkey rides along the beach. It was nice though! We headed inland to Grenada, and spent time wandering about the Alhambra castle, and Grenada's picturesque spots. On the way back to the coast the Renault got a new name, Smokey. It started to blow clouds of blue smoke. It nearly got us to the coast, at just outside Almeria it went bang, and died. We tried to sell it to a guy in a small village, who was going to offer us the scrap metal value of the car. We told him he was a crook, and left it in a bleak place off the side of the road, took a bus to Valencia. Rob and Joan went to a bullfight, I slept in a park instead, after some sweet wine.
This is a nice old city, with a port and an old city area, full of ancient houses in narrow streets, which lead to small squares. These squares turn into cafes and life after dark. It seems every one goes out in the warm summer evening air to just walk about the local squares.
We flew out of Spain on an old prop driven plane that bounced its way across the Med to Athens.

Greece

Athens Airport was a welcome sight after this plane ride. It was late night when we arrived and walking through the terminal we saw heaps of bodies sleeping all over the place, Flights were delayed, and it seemed that the airport was the place to sleep. Outside on the lawns were even more sleepers cocooned in their sleeping bags.

We booked into a motel near the centre of the city, below the Acropolis, in an old square. The markets were nearby, and the early morning market noises introduced us to daytime Athens.

It's all Greek! Signs, shops, buses and people speaking and gesticulating to each other. I found a market stall that sold small souvlakis, and just about lived on this,(pita bread filled with chunks of meat surprises) while in Greece.

Nearby was a park, I walked into it and up to a huge round bird aviary. It was full of all colours of budgies. I had never seen so many budgies in one aviary before. From the aviary, I look up the hill to the ruins of the Acropolis and through the sprawl of buildings to the centre of the city. These buildings ranged from modern, to ancient.

We took a taxi across Athens to visit the sister of a local Greek Milk Bar owner in Tassie. Rob used to get on well with these people and had a gift to pass on. The taxi was a mid-60s Holden. His cousin had sent it back to him. The taxi driver was proud of this Holden and filled the edges of the windscreen with photos and all sorts of dandling things. (Later we saw that buses and any form of transport were always well decorated inside.)

The people we visited lived in an apartment up about 3 floors. She had prepared a huge meal of all sorts of Greek goodies. The hospitality was unbelievable and the questions and interest in Tasmania was great.

Rob and Joan wanted to cruise the Greek Islands; I wanted to see a bit more of Athens, so we decided to catch up on an island in about 10 days.

I enjoyed the cafes, the food stalls, and just the the busyness of the place and the warm evenings with people about everywhere. I had intended to go up

to the Acropolis, check out a few museums and look for ancient sites, but didn't get past living and looking at people.

The port at Athens, Piraeus is a busy place. Like all ports, It has commercial docks all actively buzzing away with cranes and trucks. But to one side is the town square of Piraeus with its lawns that front onto an old building that acts as the ferry terminal. From here large ferries cruise off to numerous islands. Some take 3 days to get to. Mostly because there are so many stops at islands en route.

I picked a ferry by taking the one that was leaving the soonest. It had heaps of Islands on its route. They were written in Greek. (I didn't have a clue what or where they were.) The idea was that if it were a nice island, I'd get off and stay there for a while. Buying a ticket for a destination was a lucky dip. They were pretty cheap fares anyway.

Looking Back at Athens from the water as we cruised away, I could see the surroundings, dry, rocky hills and the ancient ruins. A strong sense that people had lived in this area for such a long time.

We passed by headlands and close to some small islands with their small white-washed villages clinging to hillsides and tumbling down to small harbours. It could have been in the time of St Paul.

We stopped at a few of the larger Islands and I got of at Sifnos. (Part of the Cyclades group)

It was a busy little harbour, I heard some young traveller's speaking English and asked where a a good place to stay would be. They told me to take a bus with the destination starting with two back-to front L's, which goes to a popular beach with free camping.

I found a bus and travelled over the winding roads, over hills and through valleys of olive trees to a small bay. There was a small taverna there, with a makeshift covered patio in the front and next to it a number of small tents. I put mine up and spent a week there. We could use the Taverna's toilet, a hole to squat over, and a tap.

The small beach was sandy and the water crystal clear. Mornings arrived with stunning colours on

the ancient hills on either side of the bay and the soft turquoise of the water.
Inland, about a kilometre was another taverna that had a large eating hall, which filled up with travellers in the evenings, roast chicken, feta cheese salads and copious glasses of retsina. Retzina is a Greek white wine that is flavoured with wood resin, that gives it the taste of paint thinners. It grows on you after a while, and being the cheapest wine, gives a good acidic stomach after throwing it up too!
Also in this valley was a taverna that opened late and was a sort of disco with a concrete slab in front of it with coloured electric lights strung above it.
There seemed to be two types of life on the islands. The Greeks would tend to their fields and olive groves, men usually dressed in long trousers with long-sleeve shirts, with their sleeves rolled up, and either wearing a beret or hat. I saw some fields being ploughed with cattle and other men leading donkeys with sacks of goods strapped to each side.
I learnt later, that the businessmen and taverna owners were usually not islanders but businessmen from Athens who had bought these places. Through the winter these places are deserted.
The women dressed in plain clothes, and seemed busy with their domestic work.
Between 1 and 4 in the afternoon, siesta time took over the island. Shops closed, people slept. All businesses open again from 5 till 8 pm.
Some taverna's stayed open during siesta, but then service was almost non-existent.
On the other hand, the travellers and tourists wandered over the island in gay abandon, with no real concern, except their own contentment.
Nudity seemed to be a big thing with the travellers, and bear bums and sunburnt tits covered the beaches. There was a cleansing of the small beach in front of our taverna. At about 4 in the afternoon, boys would drive the herd of goats along the beach back to the enclosure they kept them in at night. It was amusing the sit on the beach edge with a drink in hand and watch the new arrivals, (especially the girls) get up disgusted from their

sunbathing and move off the beach as the large goat herd would leisurely walk past. (Some goats had clunking bells around their necks, it added to the racket the moving goatherd made.) The goat herder boys thought this was a great joke. The local sense of humour!

In the middle of my stay, I caught the double LL bus back to the main town to see the countryside, and on the way back, slept on the bus and woke up at a much larger beach with hundreds of tourists. The bus stopped right on the beach. I got off and straight in front of me were three girls beautifully nude, very brown, and totally oblivious that the bus was unloading its passengers about 2 meters away from them. Apparently, this was the place I was supposed to have gone to! And yes, at about 4 pm a large number of goats cleansed that beach too!

I liked my little piece of backwater and the odd people who came to camp for a few days in our basic campsite.

A young Australian guy turned up on a Honda 500. He was travelling the Islands by bike! Seemed a good idea too! I sat at the taverna with a young Yank who took well over an hour to tell me the story about the "Close Encounters of the Third Kind", movie. He was waiting for aa alien sign. It was the best movie he had ever seen.

Swapping paperbacks was common, the only problem is that I finished up with junk, maybe I was a soft touch to unload them for swaps.

I walked up the barren hills near the beach, and swam quite a bit, generally had very quiet days and long warm evenings at the spots nearby.

I returned to Piraeus and met up with a Kiwi who was looking for a job on a ship to get a working passage back to New Zealand. He and I and many others lived and slept on the grass in front of the ferry terminal.

I had a few days of watching the ferries come and go and seeing hoards of people flow through the terminal. I started to feel like an experienced lawn dweller. I had to move on. I did get to see "Close encounters of the third kind", at a local picture

theatre. It was subtitled in Greek and had very poor sound quality, but I got the gist of the story.
I took a ferry to Hydra, apparently Leonard Cohen lived there from time to time. This is a great ferry trip; the ferry goes between the mainland and Poros through a deep very narrow channel. There were small white chapels on tiny islands just off the coast, and the hills were bare, rocky and had the look of an ageless cultivation.
Hydra is one of the larger of the Saronic Gulf Islands. Approaching it, it looks like a fat, white cigar. Steep cliffs for coastlines and the most beautiful little harbour at Idra. Getting off the small ferry, women met travellers at the harbour shouting, "Room, room". I said yes and followed this old lady dressed in black through some narrow streets to her house. It was old, a door in a wall. The room was pleasant. I asked to stay for 3 nights.
Idra has no vehicles, just donkeys and a few tractors. The Island lives off tourism or fishing. There was a good fishing fleet of brightly painted wooden open boats, with eyes painted on their bows.
On the top of the hill is a monastery. The town of Idra had a number of Orthodox Priests, wearing long dark robes; round black flat-topped hats and sandals. Each had a long grey beard and seemed to ooze wisdom. At siesta time, it was common to see a couple of priests sitting at the taverna patio, chatting away and flicking a small necklace of worry beads in their hands. Many people seemed to have these worry beads. The click they made each time they were flicked into the palm of the hand, was heard everywhere.
There was a lovely coastal walk past small coves with tiny farms, fishing houses, and tiny white chapels to a small stony beach. The only one in the area.
Idra is a popular spot for day-trippers from Athens, yet in the evenings it was quiet. I found a café with a photo of Leonard Cohen dining there; I didn't find him though.
I went to an open-air cinema. This was a hole in

the wall, which led into a courtyard between houses. It had four tall walls around it, no roof, and rows of bench seats. It was full of locals. I sat with my souvlaki and retsina and watched Greek movies under the stars. It was great!

Back at Piraeus this time, I booked into a cheap Hotel. (I wanted an upgrade to the lawn in front of the ferry terminal.) I had about a week before I was to meet up with Rob and Joan. I looked into taking a boat to Alexandra in Egypt, a few days in Crete, a train to Turkey; Athens is the hub of many departures.

Piraeus was familiar to me now, I knew the cafes, and the coffee shops and enjoyed being in one of the world's ports. I also got a taste for ouzo. The aniseed-tasting spirit drink, that seems to be the national drink of Greece. I found a large open cafe near the markets. The markets wound down mid-morning with the men would sit around small tables, playing cards or board games. The cards and boards were well faded and well used; each man had a smoke and a glass of ouzo. With the ouzo came a small plate of pickled things and some olives. This arrived every time a glass of ouzo was ordered. A nice compliment to the drink I saw a poster of an island with palm trees on it. Skiathos, in the Northern Sporades.

The ferry trip followed the mainland coast. On board, sitting opposite me was an elderly couple, I suppose they were Austrian. They were both dressed as if they were off to church in their Sunday best, mid-winter. We smiled at each other, they seemed content, and must have felt they were making a mark on what fashion should be while travelling abroad.

It is a beautiful Island, with many trees and some pretty beaches. The port was a small, busy place. The Greek navy was in town; they had been exercising off the coast of Turkey. There was still a lot of tension between Turkey and Greece.

I set up my tent on the side of a quiet bay under some trees on grass. I was about 3 miles out of town and just down the road was a simple taverna. There were a few other travelers camping in the area. It

was a bare-bum beach, and I tried that one too! (I was still very self-conscious with my white, heat rash, and spotted bum, and I thought it would be a good cure.) It was a good way to pass time reading books.

I went into town one night and stayed there. When I returned to my tent, my clothes and stuff were strewn all over the place outside my tent. I found my Moroccan leather bag, further down the beach, luckily it had my passport jammed in it. (The cloth passport holder with a neckband on it that someone in Tassie had made for me had been taken). Strange that they replaced the passport. However,my camera (I had only taken one film all the time I had been overseas), my short-wave radio was missing and some beads.

I suppose I was slack, just leaving the place for nearly two days. It looked a lot like some other tourist had ripped me off. I went to the police station and tried to explain, but no one seemed too interested, at least I still had my money and passport.

I didn't find palm trees on Skiathos, I found some very beautiful spots, and enjoyed the local warmth of this quiet island.

I took a small ferry to the nearest port Volos, on the mainland. From Volos, I took a bus along the coastal plains back to Athens. Along the way, I wondered what ancient armies walked this route to conquer Athens.

It was time to catch up with Rob and Joan. I took a ferry to Santorini a volcanic island in the south. It was a long boat trip and full of passengers. We stopped at a lot of Island ports and more people seemed to get on at each than get off. The deck of the ferry was full of European bodies baring all they could to the sun. A group of very fat middle-aged Germans lay on a very large cargo hatch that was vibrating with the ship's engines. These women were semi-clothed and their fat bulky bodies vibrated with the hatch, Not a pleasant site.

The Greek Islands never fail to surprise. Sailing through a huge lagoon approaching Santorini, with steep cliffs on the near islands,we entered a harbour

crater rim mainland of Santorini. Years ago a volcano erupted and blew this huge hole, that became this wonderful lagoon.
The ferry berthed at a small wharf at the base of a steep 500-ft cliff. There was a steep narrow path leading up to the top of the cliff to Thira the main town. Heaps of locals with donkeys were waiting for passengers and freight. I got off here and decided to walk up following the donkeys, and felt like one when I got to the top!
Close to the top of the cliff, we came past doors and windows framed into the cliff, with neat pathways to them. Some of these houses carved into the cliff were huge and had ornate columns on either side of the doorways. They appeared to be very old.
The town of Thira, is full of small buildings, whitewashed with blue roofs. There is a town square surrounded by shops, tavernas and market place to one side. The view across the island and along the dramatic coastline was stunning.
I took a bus across the island to Perissa beach. Perissa has a camping ground of sorts and is a small fishing village at the foot of a very steep, flat-topped, hill. The top of this high hill has ruins of ancient Thira. The beach at Perissa is black, volcanic sand, backed hot by the sun. There were a few tavernas, an old church, and boat sheds further down the beach. I set up my little tent near the beach and wondered where Rob and Joan would be.
Later that night, I heard music from below a building and walked down the steps to a disco in someone's basement. They had a bar, couches, and lights and it seemed lively. I met some Irish ladies, got on really well with them. Much later that night, Rob and Joan turned up in the disco. They had found a room nearby and were not surprised to find me, in the company of these lively Irish ladies.
It was a lazy life at Perissa. The Irish ladies stayed there for about three days, The church bell rang at 6:00 in the morning and again at midday, every day. The track up the hill to ancient Thira was steep and seemed endless, so we just sat on the Taverna patio and watched tiny dots of people

slowly make their way to the top. Dipped in for a swim, and ate roasted chicken, and fried fish.
Santorini has its own vineyards and white wine. It's cheap, nice and you buy it in bulk in whatever container you can find.
There are also archeological sites being carefully dug that you can help at. Minoan civilization was strong on this Island. I went to see some mosaic floors that pre date the Greek era.
Back to Thira at night had a very lively square, music from every building, food everywhere and a casual atmosphere through the warm evening to starry nights.
Santorini has a tiny airfield; often we see small planes fly overhead.
After a long ferry trip back to Athens, we said farewell to Joan, who flew back to Australia directly that same day. (She took my sword from Spain with her.)
Rob and I boarded a bus to Paris.
Greece was an enjoyable, lazy month. I didn't see many of the ancient sites, or get up to the Acropolis. I ate well and enjoyed being on my own at times and the unexpected places and people that I met. I wanted to return and spend more time on the mainland of Greece, stopping off at many of the islands that I saw from a distance or heard about on my travels. It's that sort of place.

Paris

We arrived in Paris after a nonstop bus trip from Athens. Smelly, grumpy and tired, we booked into a small cheap hotel at Pt d'Italie. The hotel had a café in the front of it and some rooms behind it at ground level. Rob and I were given a small room with only a double bed in it. We got it for the price of a single room. So here I was in Paris in bed with Rob Oates.

The idea was to get work in Paris, and find an apartment in the city and learn to speak and be French. We didn't have work permits for France and decided to find work at the Embassy as they could employ anybody. After visiting a number of Embassy we realized that was not a good idea. The British and Australian Embassy gave an indication that they may need some gardeners / handymen in a few weeks. I rang NCR and they also had work for us in a few weeks. That seemed fine to Me.

We walked to the Eiffel Tower, found a café nearby and had our long-awaited coffee under the Eiffel Tower. Aladdin's coffee shop in Tassie was toasted!

We stayed a couple of weeks in Pt d'Italie, still sharing the bed, and casually seeing Paris.

Paris is a city for walking. You can walk for hours across the ornate bridges, Notre Dame, along the riverside promenade, and through the parks. The Metro Underground is a maze, that takes you anywhere, but where you want to go, and the buses wait in traffic jams.

Rob lost interest in staying in Europe after a couple of weeks and flew back to Tasmania. I still wanted to work for NCR in Paris and stay there for a couple of months. There were problems and delays in getting permits. All the previous times I had found work at NCR I had it planned in advance, this allowed time for permits etc. However, this time, it was a spur-of-the-moment application.

A few days after Rob left, I went to London.

In London, I lost the will to start again and face winter in Europe.

I flew back to Tasmania, via Bali. At Bali, I

decided to stay on the plane and keep going to Melbourne. I had booked 5 days there, but once I got moving to Australia, I just wanted to get there!
From the Melbourne Airport, I rang Mum and Dad to tell them I would be home that evening. They were surprised.
I didn't have any presents, so I bought Janet some opal earrings, and Dad a bottle of Dutch gin, and Mum some 4711.
The Norwest coast of Tassie from the air as I flew into Devonport, with its rolling hills and green paddocks, sure looked homely to me! I looked out the window at the ferry terminal, below on the Mersey River, which I left quite some time ago.
I wondered what my friends were up to, and what it would be like to slot back into Tassie lifestyle.
I don't think I was homesick, just wanted to get back into a normal life again with regular people I had a history with, and family I could drop in a see.
Maybe renew some old friendships,
November 1978, summer's here again!
"Find a girl, settle down,
if you want, you can marry….

Launceston

Back, home? Nearly 2 years of OE behind me,
now I was picking up the pieces, moving on from
where I once leapt off. The pieces had changed
shape. The puzzle I was building had another
image.

Launceston, flatting, and weekends at various
friends homes throughout Tasmania, brought on the urge
to 'move on' again. Marriage had given its comfort and
isolation, to the old mates. The good 'ole friends,
had lived on while I was away, they stilled played well-worn
records and slide shows filled walls with well-commented-on slides,
even some arty ones of dripping taps, some of old boys with toys.

It was nice, seemed very nice. It could have
been nice for me too. Maybe my well-used old
rucksack, a well-stamped passport, the stretching
out for just a little more ,was the reason to return
to travelling again on my own

I had seen much in my own self-absorption
while living the OE. However, many times, many
times, aloud, I would call out, imagine my friends
from Tassie with me, see this, hear that, take your
photo, and experience this with me! Why could
only I pack up and go?

In London, my Sydneysider fellow bedsitter
mate of Highgate Hil, tried to charm a French lady with his
holiday escapades on Anse Vata Beach in
Noumea. I recalled an advert on the inside of a
City train in Sydney some years before,
Noumea 3 days $240.00.

Palm tree-lined sweeping bay, resort hotel in the
background and the white beach with warm slim
French bikini bunnies.

Back in 1974 I heard a rumour that a technician was needed
for a few weeks in Noumea. I waited outside the
Local Sydney NCR technical manager's office, I would
volunteer, and I could do it. I had just come to the
end of a 6-week training course in Sydney. I was
already halfway there from Hobart. I was 19 then, I
was invincible. I was also impatient and after a
20 minutes wait, turned, walked to the railway
station, took the train with the beckoning advert
back to the hotel and soon back to Hobart. I let a
chance go by...

Now,79's summer is nearly over in Launceston. My flatmate is almost married. Noumea hopefully beckons another resident. I wrote a letter….
Reply arrived!
John Nixon, the owner of NCR in Noumea, had answered my letter, and yes, needed a technician, in a few weeks. Please phone, acceptance, and mail passport details; get a police clearance certificate to Noumea.
But! Don't tell anyone at NCR what you're doing, I don't want to be accused of pinching another Aussie technician. (Head hunted was not the term to use, in these islands!) I resigned, told friends I was off again, and had a few days with Mum and Dad, self-absorbed in the imagery of a old tropical train advert. I did eventually tell my Tassie NCR manager, that I was going to live in Noumea. We had a beer and I think he understood that I still had a bit more travelling to do! (At least I hadn't jumped ship and gone to work for the local opposition, as was first suspected. I had kept some self-respect! The career bridge was still intact behind me.)
Over the past 2 years, this had become a pattern. Write a letter off to the country of choice and see if there is a chance of a few month's work as a relieving technician. It had worked well during the OE, Why not continue?
One more task before I go. A dentist!
"Don't lay around
Don't stay around,
This old town too long,
Summer's almost gone,
Winter's travelin on!"

Tontouta

Mouth full of fillings, blue sea thousands of feet
below, and a small bottle of Aussie Red to finish off
the meal. It was Monday, 19th March 79.
Looking out the window, my mind drifted along
with thoughts and past events.
Since my early teens, I had a fierce determination
to be independent. (This independence still allowed
Mum to make my bed and lay out what clothes I should
wear for the day!)
growing up. I had various after and before-school jobs, paid my
own school fees and saved a bit for holidays and a
new bicycle. I rarely discussed my thoughts with family at home
and held onto the images of my peers.
In Tassie, I moved in a variety of circles in my mid-teens,
from the local reformed church youth group to the
so-called cool set who flatted in Launy and were
into whatever was available. I enjoyed the music of
the day and became snobbish in not listening to the
commercial rubbish on the radio, I enjoyed
weekend stopovers in the Launy friends flats, I was naïve,
being more of an observer than a participator. I
was there, part of the scene, but not of the scene.
My OE developed my independence into a
confidence that I could pick a country and if there
was employment available, I could move over and
have a life in another society.
I had developed good survival skills and was
able to adapt easily to new environments, yet, I had
this reservedness to be part of the scene, but not of
the scene.
On the plane, the glass of the Aussie Red was gone, and I thought
about the pieces I had tried to put together over the
past months in Tassie. I had hoped that romance
would develop with an old friend, much water had
flowed under that bridge to hold that together. I
had a few romantic encounters with friends (later
learned that there were opportunities, but I was blind
to see at the time.) yet, now I didn't feel I was
leaving anyone behind. In a way that was pleasing
too!
My expectations for the future were intermingled
with a desire to again live the life of not knowing
what was around the next corner, yet looking

forward to turning that corner. I wanted to save and put together some money for later travel, also I wanted to taste the experiences of a French lifestyle. (My departure from Europe some months ago, was from Paris. I could have lived and worked there, but came back to Tassie to other commitments instead, before the work and immigration permits were completed.)

Oh yes! It's fair to say that I was single, and wouldn't mind the opportunity for romance. My idea of a romance was permancy, I wanted substance and time. I had not developed the skills of small talk and never enjoyed superficial socializing. This friendships that I was seeking rarely occurred. I had morality of sorts, that was a mix of Christian ethics and New Age concepts that I gleaned from contemporary song lyrics. This is what I wanted from a relationship.

Destination Noumea. I expected a beach like that in the train advert. French people as in France and warmth and tropical splendour as I had seen in an old library book in Tassie. Its comments on Noumea were that it was a popular retreat for the US army GI's during WW2, and had a number of corrugated iron quonset huts still used as shops and warehouses. Actually, I really didn't have a clue what I was going to.

Tontouta Airport is nothing like Kingsford Smith, Sydney where I had left. It was hot, palm tress on the outer edge of the airfiel situated, on a coastal plain disappearing into mangrove swamp as it reached the sea. Not far from the airport, the coastal plain stopped at the foot of a high steep maintain range this is the backbone, all the length of New Caledonia. These scarred mountains with a thick jungle in the lower valleys and patches of sparse vegetation from mid-way up the mountains divided the Island and its climate. The West Side with its coastal plain was swampy with strips of agricultural land that was farmed with stock and crops. Plantations were mostly on the other side of the island and to the north. Noumea is on the southwestern corner of the island nestled between small hills sprawling along the valleys and along

the sandy bays.
Customs, and immigration officials are all white, thin and very French. Gendarmes with brown uniforms and flat peaked hats stood about the airport lounges. Ceiling fans tried to move the humid air. Melanesian ladies were sweeping the floor in their colourful mother hubbards, and some Melanesian men pushed baggage carts in shabby uniforms. Anyone of any rank was white, some Polynesian Tahitian girls served in the tourist shops and the bar.
Pierre Huron met me at the welcome lounge. He was a tall Frenchman, and technician for John Nixon and had lived for some time in Sydney. A charming man, very polite and had exceptional manners. He would move around you as if you were waited on in a silver service restaurant He had a habit of always considering his answers before he would reply. That moment of pause made me wonder if he had heard my question or not.
The hour's drive into Noumea put me back in France. It was as if a chunk of France had been cut off and towed to the tropics. Road signs in familiar French Blue. Cars were mainly Peugeots and Renaults with the odd Citroen. Vans and trucks were those odd-looking French commercial bulky Renaults. Not a Holden or Falcon in sight! The older farmhouses were like Queenslanders that were modified to a French style.
Leaving the coastal plain and entering the foothills to Noumea, we passed near a suburb of multistory concrete apartments. These were placed close together washing hanging out of every balcony. These were the Melanesian homes. Kanak's, pushed out to the edge of town and bussed into work each day.
Near the wharf is a large expanse of land, with scrappers moving dirt mounds that trucks were dumping. Further on the scrappers were emptying their contents onto a conveyor belt to run along the

wharf to loading ships. This was SLN. Societe le Nickel. The dirt was New Caledonia's claim to fortune, Nickel. The high mountain backbone of New Caledonia with scares I had seen from the plane was all in the cause to extract nickel.
The high-rise apartments I had seen earlier was France's reward to the Kanak's for the exchange of their nickel.
Past the wharves, and on into the city centre.
The city centre was a rectangular grass park with a band rotunda, shops, and hotels boarding it. The traffic was congested and taxis haphazardly parked alongside the Park. Mopeds buzzing about and the traffic lights all had a small set of lights halfway up the pole for short people on mopeds. Cafes with pavement seating and shops called Boulangerie, Pastisserie, and a Café de Paris. Stella Atois, and Heineken signs above Bars and Tabac above small cafes.
The taller buildings were either banks or office buildings that looked like government blocks.
John Nixon's NCR was just on the edge of the commercial area. A three-story apartment building, with the lower floor and half the middle converted into a shop/ workshop and offices. A huge mango tree in the car park, and familiar NCR posters on the salesroom walls. John and his family lived on the top floor apartment that had a view over the city and across to the small ship harbour. Pierre pulled up and led me through the building, past inquisitive eyes up to John's office.
John Nixon started his business in the late 60's and now employed a number of people, programmers, salespeople, and technicians. Besides IBM, his company was the next most influential supplier of business equipment in Noumea.
John Nixon, an Australian who moved to Noumea and married a local colon had started his business from the back of a TV repair shop. He was not much taller than myself, early 40's, spoke loudly and enjoyed the small Business Empire he had created for himself.
I soon learned that this empire had offices in

PT Vila in the New Hebrides and Honiara in the Solomon Islands.
My job had changed, I was to move up to Pt Vila and be a caretaker manager while the manager Neil Begely was to be away on annual leave. Also, some new computers were to be installed up there.
The ticket was booked for Thursday!
I met Gavin Black, a Kiwi who had lived in Sydney. Gavin was one of the chief instructors for NCR in Australia. He was poached from Sydney by John Nixon, a year earlier. Now I could understand why when I resigned from NCR in Tassie he stressed that I don't tell them where I was going!
Bill Saville, another Australian, ex NCR was the senior programmer, Allan Vindin and ex-Sydney Bookshop owner now accountant, and about a dozen French people made up the staff.
It all became familiar very quickly. The idea of leaving Noumea and going up to Pt Vila didn't appeal, however, I had arrived and now that was what was needed at the time. So what! I'm only 23, I'm cool.
Day one over, Allan drove me over the hill to check into an apartment motel in Anse Vata, the off to have a beer with the rest of 'em.

Anse Vata

The advert inside the Sydney train came to life! Yep! Sweeping bay, small islands in the distance, Hotels and café's lining the shore, Palm tree lined promenade the length of the beach and Hotel Royale, casino included, down the far end of the beach.

Allan took me straight to the Bar in the Anse Vata Hotel. We both perched up on the cane barstools, looking over the bar to the sea and distant islands.

"Deux Pression" a nice cold beer! Just after 4 in the arvo, in a French holiday bar, didn't seem a bad way to end my first day.

Bill arrived soon afterwards, another pression on the bar as he placed the Sydney paper on the bar. He made some comments about the weekend's Sydney rugby league game, then in came a noisy, young, tall, loud, curly headed guy. With another pression on the bar, and a sigh from Bill, Paul Shirley sat down.

Paul was a programmer at Societe Generate Banque, A kiwi, and a manner that seemed to irritate Bill.

Then in came Tuffy another Kiwi school teacher, early 30's. He taught English at the Lycee and hated it. Hated Noumea, I think he didn't like New Zealand either. Still, he could take the brunt of jokes thrown at him at his expense. I think he enjoyed his self-inflicted misery.

The bar at this time of the day was the meeting place for Aussie and Kiwi expats living in Noumea. Conversation mainly rugby (being from Tasmania, I had absolutely no interest in ruby,) I was now also an expat, and liked the sound of that! Other people arrived; some were tour operators who took tourists out to Lighthouse Island. I learned later that Tuffy could sing and play guitar and was a popular addition to weekend trips out to the lighthouse. So there were bits he could tolerate in Noumea.

Allan turned out to be a personality in Noumea. Just behind the Anse Vata Hotel was the Anse Vata racecourse. Horse racing, Allan was one of the race course stewards, earlier in the year he and a bunch of

local expats and a few Frogs put a cricket team together and represented New Caledonia in the South Pacific Games in Fiji. I think they made some runs. He also had a very pretty daughter, so I was told, I didn't ever meet her.
Bill was once a top schoolboy rugby player until he was struck down with polio. He met his Aussie wife, Carol, in Noumea, married on a Friday night, and now ran the Data Bureau across the corridor from John's office.
I did find that to have a drinks shout was different. A round would be served and the individual receipts for each pression would be placed in front of each drinker. This little pile of receipts grew, but no money passed over the bar. When it was time to go, you just picked up your little stack of receipts and handed them to the barman, he made the l'addition and then you paid. (I thought of Aussie and Kiwi tourists, who would like this on their last day of holidays, walk to the toilet and keep going!)
I heard the other two expat drinking spots in town were Le Squash and the Yacht Club. Noumea wasn't that big after all. All the expats seemed to know of each other in Noumea and local gossip seemed to be the fuel of conversation.
I felt new, single and didn't have much to contribute to the conversation.
I got to know some of the people at NCR the next day. I learnt that a French-speaking white person in Noumea is not always a Frog!
Renaud was a young, dark tall French technician. He was just married, spoke a little English. He came up to me and shook my hand and laughed at me when he said that I was going to live in Pt Vila. He was born there and didn't want to go and live there again. His family was colon.. They had lived in New Hebrides and New Caledonia for some generations. These islands were their home. The history of the French occupation ran through his veins. He was a relation to the Colardo family. (John Nixon's wife was a Colardo, I met many more Colardo’s over the next years!)
There was also Robere, he spoke very little English, had been in Noumea for some years, in his

mid to late 40's. He was one of the Pied Noir. French people who lived in Algeria, were driven out at indendence. He was reluctant to live in France, so moved out to another French dependency. Noumea had a mixture of French people in this category, some were from Indochine (Vietnam) and other French countries. I later met some half-castes who seemed disposed from where they came from and they weren't interested in living in France.

This type of Frenchman owned a lot of the smaller businesses in Noumea. The smaller cafés were run by half-caste Tahitians.

Pierre Jaquierre and Pierre Huron were the adventurers of France. They left France at a young age to seek Romance and fortune in the French colonies. Both were in their early 30's married and now living the less adventurous life of suburbia. Wife and young family, house to pay off, holidays once a year, content.

There were true Parisian French in Noumea too! These were mainly professionals, Government officials, police, teacher etc. The French policy on salary structure was that you would get a percentage factor on top of your salary depending on how far away from Paris you worked. Noumea paid top rates.

Mast of these people were in Noumea for 2 or 3-year contracts. Maximum income tax was 10%.

Noumea, then was a predominately white city with the Kanak's as fringe dwellers doing all the menial tasks that the city provided.

There was also one other sector in the community. These were the army boys. Most of them were in their late teens or early 20'S. Medium height, skinny. And crew cuts. These young guys used to frequent the Bars at night, trying to act cool and tough. They had that French stuck-up ness about them. It wasn't snobbery, more like a juvenile lout. These guys were out from France on short-term national army service and thought they were tough legionaries or something. I tried hard not to mix with them!

Half-caste Tahitian young women are gorgeous. Slim, curvy and well aware of their femininity and

experts at using this to their best advantage. It was another league! Most French women in Noumea were expressions of flare and fashion. On tourist ship days, when the streets were full of Aussie and Kiwi Sheila's, there was no comparison. (I don't think the Sheila's liked being shown up by the local French!)

There was a marketplace and shops on the fringe of the city that was popular with the Wallis and Futuna communities and full-blood Tahitians. These people were the huge Polynesian races. Big, tall men with equally larger women. I wanted to get a photo of these women walking back from the bakery with three or four French stick loves under each arm, shuffling off to their homes. These people spoke Tahitian and other Polynesian languages.

One thing for certain, Noumea was part of France. To post a letter to France was the same cost as posting it in Paris. Noumea in French terms was considered as a suburb of Paris. This meant highly subsidized freight costs between France and New Caledonia. The shops were full of French products. Supermarkets carried all the French brands, and very little of the products in the supermarkets or shops came from Australia or NZ. (The reason for this was the high import duties imposed on non-French goods.) This also meant that most of the NCR products that John Nixon sold were imported from France. Another restriction in the computer/business equipment field was that the

French typing keyboards had different letters and placement of the keys on the keyboard. Also, all instruction booklets had to be in French.

This total Frenchness used to get up the noses of Aussie tourist who would arrive and expect to get Fosters and XXXX beer on tap, only to find they were hard to get! Also for the Aussie to find a nice familiar wine was confused by the abundant French Wines

(No Aussie wines on their shelves) This may have also, something to do with the French appreciation of French wine.

The local currency was South Pacific Francs. About 100 francs for an Aussie dollar. Everything

was priced in thousands or millions of Francs The coins were made of nickel. This made the expensive items in shops even seem more overpriced. There may have been little costs in getting the French products to Noumea, but the overinflated public service salaries pushed the local business prices up.

Mornings at Anse Vata were tropical. Minah birds out on the lawns, humidity hits you as you walk out the door of air-conditioned comfort, and work starts at 7:30. I still wore my Tassie trousers and long sleeve shirts and fitted in with the local French who never wore shorts and long socks that is the typical attire of the Aussie / Kiwi businessmen. I needed clothes to suit this climate, but not at Noumea prices!

Pt. Vila

Thursday, 22 March the UTA Fokker friendship touched down at the airport Pt. Vila.

Efate, the Island of Pt Vila is about two-hour flight north of Noumea. Situated in the centre of the New Hebrides Island group. It's about 25 miles across and mountainous in the centre.

Pt Vila is on the southern side of the Island with its own harbour and lagoons. The mountainous centre of the island is covered in a deep thick jungle. The flatter coastal strips are covered with coconut plantations. There is a coral road that goes around the perimeter of the Island, with a manganese mine on the western side.

On the approach to the runway, I saw small islands in the harbour and villages between the rows of coconut trees. Pt Vila airport was small and had simplicity. We walked off the plane onto the tarmac and through into the arrival lounge. Both the Tricolour and Union Jack flew above the terminal. We assembled into two lines pass through immigration. One line towards an officer in blue uniform with a Union Jack above his counter, the other to an officer in a light blue uniform with the Tricolour above his counter. Both men were Melanesian and smiling.

Our luggage was towed on large trolleys to the customs counter where we picked up our bags off the trolleys and back into two lines, customs or duane.

Again, staffed by smiling Melanesians. There were Melanesians everywhere. I walked through the wooden swing doors into the public hall to meet the outstretched hand of another smiling face. This time, wearing a short-sleeved shirt, business shorts and long socks, bearded and that of Neil Begely. Fans noisily clattered overhead, I saw a small bar to one side of the hall and tourist motel booths on the other.

The small airport was full of commotion with minibuses parked outside, baggage all over the footpath in chaos and lost tourists looking at the buses wondering if the native driver could take them safely to their holiday motels. Taxis lined up,

rusting and patchy, hoping to score a fare. All the drivers were Melanesian. It seemed that whites did not rule supreme here!
Neil pilled my stuff into his Landcruiser and off we went to Pt Vila.
It was hot, and humid; windows wound down to let in a rush of air, green everywhere. We passed shoddy concrete shops, and shanty dwellings made out of anything to keep the weather out, with women and kids sitting outside of them in mother Hubbards. Paw paw trees, banana trees between buildings and fence posts that had sprouted held up the wire fences along the paddocks grown into trees. These paddocks along the airport road had clusters of trees, some smooth barked with huge buttress root systems above ground. A huge banyan tree in one paddock covered with vines, its cluster of roots hanging down from the lower branches made it about the width of a house. The Township of Pt Vila was not far from the airport. Neil pointed out buildings and rapidly told me how a Condominium works. We drove past groups of Melanesians walking along the road, some with woven basket bags hanging from their shoulders, nearly all the men were dressed in T-shirts and shorts, wearing thongs. Many more shanty dwellings and native gardens full of strange, green vegetables. I just stared at it all as the Landcruiser bounced through the potholes into the centre of town.

Condominium

You have to opt! Francophone or Anglophone!
That summed up the approach to understanding
the Condominium of New Hebrides.
New Hebrides is unique. It is the only country
that is jointly ruled by Britain and France.
How this arrangement actually operated was a
lesson in international politics. Two European
powers agreeing to govern one country were akin to
the international arms race! It had no logic and was
full of political rivalry.
I opted to become a Francophone. That meant I
was considered a Frenchman under French law.
(This supposedly, made documentation to travel
between New Caledonia and New Hebrides easier.)
The result of the condominium government was
that it was nearly impossible for the French and
British to work on a project together, so if
something was needed it would be done in twos.
There was a complete British civil service headed
by a British Commissioner, and of course a
complete French civil service headed by a French
Commissioner. Pt Vila had a distinctly French
complete French civil service headed by a French
Commissioner. Pt Vila had French and
British areas that housed its civil servants and
government offices.
The British Commissioner lived on his own
Island in the centre of Pt Vila harbour (Iririki
Island) The French Commissioner's residence was
high on the hill behind the city overlooking the
harbour, (slightly more elevated than the British
residency on top of the hill on his island!)
The only place where there seemed to be co-
operation between the French and British were the
police. Always walking or driving about in pairs.
No matter if you opted for francophone or anglophone,
you would be nabbed!
The French had their own education system that
taught in French and catered from young infants to
Lycee, eventually university in France. The British
had an English primary school and then preferred
to send their children to boarding schools back in
the UK. The other schools under British rule were

taught in Bishlama, the New Hebridean version of Pidgin English. There were two high schools in the New Hebrides, one a missionary high school on the other side of Efate, Onesua High School.
The country also had two currencies, FNH, (Franc New Hebrides) and the Australian Doltar. 100 FNH equaled $1.00AUD. Everyone used cheque accounts, local cheques were accepted everywhere. If you bounced a cheque the whole commercial sector would know the next day. That was an unforgivable sin!
There seemed to be far more Francophones that Anglophones, as the Francophones were also the large number of colon's that had businesses and plantations on the islands. Francophones owned most of the plantations. All the major islands in the group had a resident French and British delegate. There were many other dual services, Two hospitals, two militia, two prisons, two law courts, and best of all, both British and French holidays were observed by all. Bastille Day and Queen's birthday are the chief occasions. The other residents on Efate were a mixture of Australian businessmen, New Zealand opportunist,
Some Chinese store owners and Tonkenese gardeners. Oh yes! Forgotten by nearly everyone, the New Hebridean nationals. However, these were the last days of the Condominium. The talk of Pt Vila was "Independence July 1980"

NCR Pt Vila

The NCR office was part of the ground floor of a three-storey apartment building halfway up the hill between the main city centre and the French Marie. The rest of the apartment building was divided into a warren of flats housing Walesian, Tonkenese, New Hebridean residents. Always kids or women out on the balconies or cooking or washing behind the building.

Neil had opened this office in the early 70's and was quite proud of it. There were 3 Melanesian technicians, an office helper and Rebecca the American secretary. Rebecca seemed to be the key person running the business, Neil the manager, hidden away in his aircon office and the boys, Willie Lop, the senior Technician, Steven a trainee and the other chap finished the day I started.

There were 2 telephones, a small workshop out the back, and a few typewriters on display. An old photocopier on one bench was used for the photocopy service. That was all that was needed to run a business in those days. Accounts etc were all manual book entries, Rebecca looked after that and took the incoming phone calls.

Neil drove a Toyota Landcruiser with a huge winch on the front of it. Rebecca had a Yellow Mini Moke and Willie Lop got about on a Honda 50 scooter

This made us look like a good size business for Pt Vila. I felt OK and no longer regretted leaving Noumea.

First things first on Day One! Neil left the office in the capable hands of Rebecca and we walked down the main street to the post office to collect mail, of for a coffee in the Chalet Cafe across the street. I was still wearing my long sleeve purple shirt and dark grey Long pants looked like a misplaced Tasmanian. Rebecca suggested some Chinese stores to buy some tropical clothes. On the way to the post office, a The Melanesian I passed looked at me and said," Good Morning Masta" It scared the life out of me! I hadn't been addressed like that before. Neil smiled at my reaction and said, "They're very polite here.

The post office in Pt Vila is right in the middle of

town. On the main street and has steps going up to it the full length of the front of the building. They say that if you stand on these steps for a morning, you will meet most of the people in Pt. Vila.
There is no postal delivery in Vila either to offices or residences. There are only a limited number of postal boxes, so every one had to use a postal box to check on their mail. To own a postal box for private use, was a great possession, since companies and businesses used up nearly all of the available ones. If someone left Pt. Vila and had a private postal box, much sucking up was done to take over that box number.
Neil introduced me to a lot of people we met at the post office and after we met someone, he would tell me where they fit into the place.
Over a coffee on the terrace of the " Chalet" watching every one visit to the post office, Neil and I got to know about each other.
Neil was to go on holiday for 3 months in a couple of weeks and Rebecca and I would run the place.

Neil Begely

I liked Neil. He was a very sociable, likable bloke. But, like most people in Pt. Vila, lived an interesting life.

Neil had been a branch manager of NCR in Geelong. (I had heard of him during my early training days in Melbourne). He came to Pt Vila in the early 70's with his wife and two kids.

Pt Vila had gained a tax haven status in the late 60.s and being jointly ruled by two of the most stable economies in Europe, this opened the door to a large financial/ legal sector.

Walk into a Bank and there would be a plaque naming all the overseas listings they represented. Trust companies only listed the big ones on their boards. It was an industry of company registrations, company accounts for anonymous, overseas clients.

Secrets and confidentiality were the trademarks of this well-greased financial sector.

There had been a building boom in the early to mid 70's as investors started to develop the finance industry. Banks were built, Trust companies sprouted up, and government buildings renewed.

John Nixon wanted to be in on the boom. So he employed Neil, sent him up to Pt Vila to start a business equipment sales office to cater for the needs of the finance sector.

Over a few years, Neil had built a considerable business for John with NCR equipment in most of the banks and government departments.

Success and Pt Vila's lifestyle had had its effects on my new boss and colleague.

Neil was born in Shanghai, China. His Mum was English and his father an Australian accountant. During the Japan-China war, Neil (a small boy) and his mum spent time in a Japanese interment camp.

Later in Melbourne, Neil's father was a bandleader in the Salvation Army. On weekend nights Neil and others would travel around the local suburbs on the back of a truck playing Hymns. His dad would conduct, his mum wearing a bonnet with her tambourine, other

women would sing with Neil also on the truck with the small band. During his teenage years it would drive him nuts, especially when the girls he liked would come up to truck with other boyfriends and stand in front of him and smile at him, teasing him.
It did give him a good grounding in music, and Neil did not drink much alcohol. He hated beer and only took wine to be polite.
Neil started a Gilbert & Sullivan Society in Pt Vila, complete with performances. Very popular amongst the English.
He was also a well-accomplished amateur magician, a great favourite with the kids at afternoon dinner parties.
He had a flare for organizing groups and events.
He was chairman of the local chapter of Kiwanis (A USA-based community service style men's club)
He was Chairman of the BESA club, (British ex servicemen's association)
Neil was single, His wife and kids had returned to Australia some years ago. Pt Vila was and is a a place where a marriage in trouble hits the rocks quite quickly. The expat society was very promiscuous with the opportunity to stray into other beds, abundant.
Rebecca had arrived on a yacht from the USA with her husband and, I suppose after months cramped together in confinement, enjoyed the spaciousness of Pt. Vila society. Her husband sailed off.
Neil and Rebecca lived together but moved about freely socially. Rebecca had a small house up on the hill behind the lagoons called Monte Matre. She would take breaks up there and paint.
Rebecca was an avid reader. The English Library had a system where you would write your name in the book you borrowed. Many, many books had her name in it. It was a way to tell if a book was worth reading.
Rebecca had an art exhibition with another local artist in the French embassy once.
Neil held dinner parties at the Tasiriki house and was also invited to many others. He socialized mainly with the British and knew most of the

French colon families. I was introduced to these people, who were mainly general managers or well-appointed public servants. Neil loved food and good coffee. He dined out a lot and the first 2 weeks in Pt Vila, I must have eaten at a good number of the restaurants.
Pt Vila closed between 11:30 and 1:30 midday. The only places open were the restaurants. So, long lunch hours in the heat of the day in locations with a good breeze or quiet overhead fans.

Willie Lop

Willie was the senior Melanesian technician. He was Man-Tanna. medium height, a bit older than I was, very dark, tight curly hair and wild eyes.

He arrived in Pt Vila from Tanna off an inter-island trading boat and spotted Neil sitting outside Burns Philp shore drinking coffee. He walked up to him and told him that he would work for him. Willie was bold and had the touch. Neil always said that he didn't employ Willie, Willie employed him!

Willie was Neil's apprentice his wit and confidence were rare amongst boys his age. Willie spoke good English and was confident amongst expats. He spoke Tannese, and Bishlama and had a good understanding of French. This was quite typical with the NewHebrideans, they were multi-lingual with a European language as their third or fourth language. (Later, I was to work with Madeline, from the Shepherds Group, who spoke English and French fluently plus a number of lacal languages)

Willie taught me during the time I worked with him, much about New Hebridean people and their ways. He had a native sense of humour and at times a native sense of logic.

Later during my stay, I went down to Tanna with Willie and saw his small village store, his custom land, and the small village (Black Sands) where he came from.

In the first few weeks I was in Pt Vila, Willie invited me to his place for a small party. His daughter was a year old, so by custom now she could have a name. He said he had bought some chickens to cook and some of his relatives would be there.

As it turned out, anyone from his side of Tanna was a relative. I arrived early evening, in the dark (It got dark early at night in New Hebrides) There were many men sitting on the ground in his lean-to garage. I was warmly welcomed and joined the group of dark men with the whites of their eyes and white teeth marking where they were. A bottle of beer passed into my hands and greetings in

Bishlama. Much laughter if I tried to reply in what 1 thought was Bishlama. I spent a bit of time talking to one of Willies uncles who was a navy sailor. They all called him Captain! He was in the British navy and served on the local patrol boat. He spoke good English and taught me a valuable lesson.
He simply said, "If you want to know the people of his country, learn to speak Bishlama. It's not poor English, it is another language that uses English, French and native words.
This was one of the few times I socialized with New Hebrideans this way. There were a few other opportunities that I took to get to know these people better.
Willie and Steven would surprise me at work when working on some typewriter or equipment, they would start singing hymns.
One day, Willie stopped mid-way through doing a repair to something in the workshop. He said" Oh! My brother has just died!" He just knew there and then.
Willie had many brothers and later I learnt many fathers too! Everyone from His village and neighbouring village was a brother and all uncles were his fathers. This was what was meant when he introduced someone to me who was Man-Ples.
Funerals could get a bit out of hand as these meant that Willie would go back to Tanna on an inter island boat and be away for 3 or 4 days. 1 remember when I was in charge Willies father died, so I let him have the week off. A month later his Father died again.
Willie was just trying me out. It may have been an uncle who died. I had taken on colonial eyes very quickly and that harsh arrogance that is easily acquired when you get used to being called Masta.
Most New Hebrideans who worked in Pt Vila in some capacity lived only slightly above the poverty line. The ones who were labourers and house servants got paid very little. Still, these were better off money-wise; than those back on the islands that laboured on the plantations cutting copra.
All around Pt Vila and in the valleys where it was possible were planted native gardens. These were

plots looked after by the wives and daughters to supplement the food and also if a good crop, sold at the local market on Wednesday and Saturday mornings.

Willie earned about $30.00 per week. I was on $300.00 per week. Still, the life he and his friends lived had all the extended family principles of sharing (Wan-Tok). He alo sent money down to Tanna to his family. So even Willie could save.

One way of disciplining an employee at the time was to threaten to sack them and make sure they would not work in Pt Vila again. They would have to go back to the islands and cut copra!

The colonial attitude could be tough and mean.

It was not in the New Hebridean people to be schemers or carry malice, or mean streaks. A theft was very rare at that time, and they were surprisingly loyal workers.

The health of the New Hebrideans working in Pt Vila that I saw was not the best. There always seems to be someone with a cough and running noises. We would blame this on the Frogs and Poms returning to Pt Vila after winters back home in Europe!)

Tropical sores or Ulcers were very common, not only with the New Hebrideans. Any cut or sore not treated with antiseptic early would get infected and turn in ulcers. Willie and most of the New Hebrideans I knew would have an ulcer somewhere on their legs or feet.

Quite often relatives would come to Pt Vila to stay with those who were working. These people would come into the town and sit about in a shady spot in groups and just watch the world go by. Occasionally calling out and waving to someone they knew, followed by hoots of laughter, or the women would grin and shout eeeehhh!

Willie had character and wit and could pull a few swift ones! Neil always said he would like to write a book about his time with Willie Lop.

Bank Johnies

There were a number of single young men about my age working at the banks or Trust companies. These guys were usually on 2-year contracts and took advantage of the opportunity to work overseas. Pt. Vila was one of those choice positions to fill. It was seen as a management cadetship.

The Australian banks at that time were small. Usually, there was a manager with his wife and family one or two single young expats johnies and a handful of local staff.

Bank of NSW had a couple of Australians, ANZ there were 4 johnies and National Bank one. Barclay's bank was much larger with a number of young married men, but there were also about 4 single men. Of course all true Englishmen!

The Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank had two young Englishmen, from Hong Kong who were there for experience and soon to move up the corporate ladder in rapid succession. "It was always said that these two guy's were of another school."

Each bank had a block of flats that they called " The Mess" there were the ANZ on the way to Le Lagon resort at the Air Melaneasie Flats. Above the wharf road was the Barclays Mess. The Bank NSW was in the English sector, The National Bank was the flat adjoining the Manager" residence.

I used to frequent these flats and socialized with them. I used to envy the idea of a number of young guys flatting in apartments together.

I had moved into the Tasiriki House, Neil had left on this 3 month holiday in Europe, Rebecca had moved out of Tasiriki and lived in her shed up on Monte Matre Hill. It was a bit quiet around at my place

The place to meet after work was the downstairs bar at the BESA Club. This bar served Australian beer on tap and had a couple of large 12ft pool tables. Upstairs in the BESA club were more upmarket bars and a dining room. The BESA club also had squash courts for a good workout. It was a great end of day meeting place and usually we

moved on to somewhere to eat whatever afterwards. Needless to say, all banks, trust companies, employed only young men. I did not meet any single women on work contracts.
There was an Aussie guy called Maurrie who managed the BESA club. He would occasionally come down and call us to a meeting, then tell us to dress more appropriately or quieten down, as the posher members upstairs were complaining. It was that sort of club also.
The BESA club had movies on a Saturday night. These were 16mm sound projector films, like school days. The dinning room meals were steak and chips.
The Big event at the BESA was the Melbourne Cup.
The bank johnies ran a tote. There were about 8 horses in a race. These horses were small wooden horses about a foot high that stood on a smooth wooden block. There was about 20ft of string tied to this block. The race was simple. You lined up with the other jockeys, wound a piece of doweling between your fingers as fast as you could to reel the horse over the line in front of you.
Horses were sold to the jockeys of each race and bets were placed on each numbered horse. If you had big forearms, you were considered a favourite. There was also a ladies race with much cackling. I was a jockey for one race, stayed mid field.
Rebecca ran a weekly quiz night at the BESA and Neil chaired the board. It was a place where the barmen knew you by name and drink preference.
I got on well with Geoff Laird; he was the bank johnie for the National Bank. A Queenslander and into fitness. He got me to go to the Gym with him and took me up the cascades near Mele-Maat village to show me the waterfall. He also helped out at the drive inn with the projector and ran the films at the BESA. Pretty busy outside of banking. He was there to save money and thought he would get fit while at it. Geoff was a bit of a dark house in that he would not go out at times. (We suspected he had a New Hebridean girlfriend.) It was not good to be public about a relationship with a local. Only the

French dared to show that.
Monday nights were the most dangerous night if you wanted to stay away from too many beers. It was HHH night. Hash House Harriers.
Affectionately called "those poofs and wankers who chase paper".
Every Monday we would assemble at some place on the outskirts of Pt Vila. Frank King would blow his Bugle and 50 to 60 men Francophones, Anglophones and some New Hebrideans would charge off following a paper trail. Some one called the Harrier would lay this paper trail for about 5-10 klms depending if it was a fit Frog or pisspot Kiwi. These paper trails had dead ends and at times were hard to follow. On paper, on paper, was shouted when the paper trail was found after misled to a dead end. Finally the home stretch, we would shout On On! This was always at the place we started the run from.
The On On was hamburgers and lots of beer.
Down Downs were the punishments for any misdemeanour during the run. This meant a tankard full of beer was to be sculled and the time recorded in the hash book.
Frogs always sculled the tankard full of wine!
There was a role call and after 50 runs you were awarded a HHH tankard. Each of the regulars was expected to be a hare and set a run, Also supply the beer and collect the Hash Cash to pay for it. $1.00 a beer can.
It was a bawdy almost bordering on animal affairs. The diehards would stay until all the beer was drunk; usually seated around the barbeque. Then a made car race to L' Houstelet Pizza bar and somehow home after that.
Drink driving was not a problem later in the evening. However, a number of bank johnies did make a horrible mess of their cars on certain nights.
It was at the Hash that I met a number of people who were not employed in the finance sector. Tom Young was an Australian who did general repairs. He lived out at Mele Beach and became a good friend. Frank King who ran a tourist glass

bottom boat in the harbour, had the loudest voice read the role call and was the official timer for down downs. There were also a number of Englishmen who held different positions in the public service, agriculture, and teachers. Not all stayed on till it was dry!

One thing that hash did was take you through areas of Pt Vila that you would not normally see. Finding the OnOn was difficult enough. The Hare would scribble instructions on the notice board outside Hebrida Store on the main street. I can remember a sad night when no one could follow the instructions.

Hare and Beer alone at the On On! I think it was a Pom.

I helped Geoff Laird set a run and the following week I set my own run. My run had parts where you could see the OnOn. This meant it was legal to short cut directly back to the OnOn. Most Hashmen ran about 2klms that night! I suppose it gave more drinking time. I got a down down for puting on a typical slack Aussie run!

Go Finis party was the biggest event for a bank johnie, usually a week before they were to leave Pt. Vila, a full-on party at the mess. Numerous down downs at the HHH on their last Monday night in town. (It used to make the new replacement recruits who arrived about that time, wonder what he was in for.)

Then on departure night, off we would all go to the airport, bottles of beer from the airbar in hand, walk up to the terminal roof and shout farewells and abuse the departing bank johnie! Dead Ant, was a popular pastime. Someone would shout dead ant and you would lay on your back and wriggle your feet and arms in the air. A bank Johnie would dead ant on the tarmac on the way to the plane in reply to a chorus of Dead Ant from the airport roof. Used to freak out the tourists.

A bank Johnie usually left with a good hifi from the duty-free shops, a good camera and a good beer gut!

Geoff Laird on his departure was an exception. I knew he had saved well, and workouts at the Gym gave him a body that would surprise the people

back home. He was one of the smarter ones.
The airport became a regular place to go to, either seeing some one off or picking people up. It was bad manners not to meet and depart with acquaintances at the airport. It also served to keep up with the gossip on who arrives with whom and with whomever they depart with. No secrets at this airport.

Social Circles

During my first couple of months in Pt Vila, it became apparent how the social circles worked. It took only a few weeks for people to work out who you were where you came from and what you were doing in the New Hebrides.

As I said earlier, the first couple of weeks I stayed close to Neil and was invited to his dinner parties. This put me in touch with the more senior businessmen and public servants, now I was seen as Neil's junior. I think they seemed confident that I could keep their business equipment going while he was on leave.

I found my own social scene amongst some of the bank johnnies and other young people working in the hospitality/tourist industry and families of colon plantation owners. It was a nice mix of young people and made the life of an expat very pleasant. I think it was about this time that I lost the urge to tell everyone I was a Tasmanian, as many people I met were not Australians and didn't care much about Australia.

There were two major tourist resorts in Pt Vila, Le Logon, at the sea end of the main lagoon, it consisted of a lovely veranda restaurant overlooking the lagoon and the small Island at the mouth of the lagoon. The resort had a pool and a number of thatched roofed burres. It was a lovely setting. Further down the inland end of the long lagoon was the Hotel Intercontinental Resort. This was more modern with square concrete two-story blocks of hotel rooms, many restaurants, a golf course and a lovely white sandy beach on the lagoon side. From the NCR house in Tasariki Park, you could see this resort.

Both resorts encouraged local expats to use their

facilities and had live bands in the evenings. Some nights, a local native string band.
I used to drop into these resorts to see which new tourists had arrived, and it was easy to make conversation, especially if you lived in Pt, Vila. However, most of the younger tourists arrived in small groups and were only friendly to a point.
A few times I would take some young ladies over to Havanah Harbour to Samoa Point. This was an ideal white sandy beach looking out to islands about a mile across the harbour; it was also a hilly, scenic drive over Clem's Hill to get there.
Some of the bank johnies were expert charmers and this was an endless source of young ladies. Most people stayed for a week, airport farewells for some bank johnies, were a weekly occurrence.
I seemed to lack something to participate, actively in this lifestyle. I had fun with the tourists though!
The Ernst brothers, Joe and Roy came into town. Roy started as a chef at the Rossi Hotel and Joe managed a plantation out to the east of Efate.
Russell Paul came from Tanna, his father Bob Paul, owned the largest plantation on Tanna.
Margaret Rouset father had a plantation behind the airport. Her mother was an Australian and her father from an old colon family.
(The same family as John Nixon's wife)
Margaret had a friend over from Australia, Camilla is a Tasmanian nurse. There was also Peter another Tasmanian at the ANZ bank. Also, Rosie from the Nautilus Dive. These were some of the young people who helped me live in Pt. Vila.
I saw the local and tourist life from the other side of the bar. I looked out over plantations from inside Homesteads and met people to whom, New Hebrides was a permanent home Life on a plantation on Efate usually meant a colon family well entrenched into the land, and a deep family history to the homestead.
The Rouset's plantation was behind the airport. It was a much larger plantation belonging to the Colardo's but over the years, divided between sons and daughters. Coconut trees, beef cattle and a

small dairy herd.
Talk around the table usually revolved around, surviving the weather, copra prices and getting something going on the plantation that the boys stuffed up. Everyone seemed to have horses and a dodgy electric generator that ran only certain times of the day, to keep the expensive diesel costs down.
Copra grown in the New Hebrides was of the poorer quality. It was mostly used for soap and other cosmetic products. Most of it went to France where it could be refined for commercial use. The coconut palm tree has a life similar to a man. It takes 20 years to mature, has a 50-year productive life. The coconuts grew in clusters under the palm prongs about 15 meters up. When they were ripe they would simply fall off the trees and lay scattered at the base of the trees. They were left there to dry out for a month or two, and then the local Melanesian labourers would collect them and take them to the smokehouse.
The smokehouse was really a large rectangular pit about 2 meters by 3 meters with a rack strung over it about 2 meters off the ground.
The boys, armed with bush knives would cut the dry, stringy husks off the coconuts and through the husks into the pits, where they would smoulder producing white smoke. On top of the racks, the white copra from inside the coconuts would be spread out to be smoked into a dark brown colour. This copra was then bagged into hessian bags, then stored to be bought by the island traders; Burns Philp or CFNH. (Who on sold it to France)
The hey day of copra prices had gone by the time I lived in Pt. Vila. Most of the Coconut trees were at the latter stage of their life. A good number of these were planted by Tonkenese labourers brought out from Indochina (Vietnam) in the early 1900's by the French plantation owners. The New Hebrideans at that time didn't see any value to a hard days work under a French tyrant! These poor Tonkenese came out on a one-way ticket, worked for a pittance and live a miserable life. (Geoff Laird took me to a Tonkenese cemetery behind an

abandoned Catholic mission on Mele Bay he had run through on a hash run. Most of the graves with Vietnamese tombstones were overgrown, although a few were still well looked after.) There was also the fear of losing the plantation to local Melanesian custom landowners on the coming Independence Day. Some plantations ran beef cattle amongst the coconut trees, to sell locally. I saw some pretty basic plantation abattoirs. The beef meat could not be exported outside of Melanesia, due to the tropical tick that lived in the skin of the cattle. This meant that meat was really cheap. Good cuts of fillet steaks were the common meat used for barbeques.
I met most of these people on the Sunset patio outside the seafront of the Hotel Rossi. This hotel was in the centre of town right on the harbour side. The Sunset bar had a roof with open walls. It overlooked the Rossi's own jetty. Spectacular tropical sunsets over Malapoa Point a few miles in the distance were the main attraction at this tired hotel that had seen a few too many years and characters of Pt Vila.
Camilla and I walked out to the end of the jetty, drinks in hand, sat down and watched the colours of a tropical James Mitchener sunset.
I was asked to join the Burn Philp cricket team! Cricket was serious stuff, and there were a number of teams playing on Saturdays. The teams were predominately ex-pats and even had a few French and colon Francophones included.
The Burns Philp team was a good one. We played out on the British paddock. This was a parade ground in front of the British Commission offices. A cricket pavilion on the edge contained the scoreboard and all the gear. No bar! Wives would run the scoreboard and we always had a small group of spectators who would clap at the right times. We all wore whites, and the good guys had full gear, including their home club sleeveless vests.
Some of the characters on this team, I kept bumping into for the next 10 years. There was
Barry Twinkain
Who was a friend of Alan Vindin in Noumea.

They had run some salvage operations a few years earlier, cutting brass off sunken World War 2 ships sunken off the Island's coasts. Paul a really good batsman, was one of the managers of Cooper Lybrand accountants. Andre Lancon had a great French name, but a broad Aussie accent. He was born in Pt Vila, about 30 at this time, ran the import side of Burns Philp, and a really playful, likable character. Russell Paul played for this team when he was in town. Gus Cuthbertson the financial manager of Burns Philp was the captain. He wore very thick glass and took a lot of stick from us when he batted. Gus has a single rowing skull. On a calm morning, he would row around Iririki Island.
A bit of an eccentric Scotsman
The most memorable cricket game was against Onesua, on the north of the Island. We flew over in small planes, one owned by Bob Kerr, an Australian, who owned the plantation at Onesua. He had a small 5-seater, single-engine plane that was covered in yellow canvas. Andre took his esky full of Fosters, and we had to be in whites for this tour!
The pitch at Onesua was next to the High School. There was a crowd of students to watch. The small cricket pavilion was about 3 meters by 2 meters only the roof was completed. This provided the shade. Boys thumbed through well-read cricket magazines and we were seen as equals to these guys on the pages! I even bowled in this game. One bowl didn't even reach the wickets. I was on par with Gus who was the last bowler in the team.
Bob Kerr's Onesua team was made up of himself and his son Tim, a number of plantation Anglophones and some expat schoolteachers. A great game! After the game drinks at Bob's resort Takara is a few miles away on the coast. To sit under the large shady trees at Takara, and look out to the pyramid-shaped Islands in the distance, makes it one of the prettiest places on Efate.
I also took an interest in scuba diving and joined the Pt Vila dive club. That is a story in itself! These social circles that I moved in, were more of social acquaintances. We did things together and

saw a bit of each other, but I considered my stay in Pt Vila to not extend past a year, and didn't really settle into any one scene.
Living on an Island with really only one town, you were bound to meet up with people you knew where ever you went. It was claustrophobic at times.

Work and Play

The main reason for me being in Pt Vila was to keep NCR going while Neil Begely was on holiday. I was to return to Noumea soon after Neil returned from his European holiday.

The largest computer in Pt Vila was at the British Department of Statistics. Ironically this was the type of computer I was being trained on those years ago in Sydney when I wanted to hop over to Noumea.

We also had a number of unreliable early styles of photocopiers in accountant offices and import companies. These didn't work too well in tropical climates and were the bane of my time as a technician. Grumpy accountants usually owned these photocopiers!

The banks and trust companies relied on their ledger computers to keep their bookkeeping ledger account cards up to date. They were unreliable pieces of equipment and kept me at work some evenings and weekends. In this place, work always comes first. That's why you were there!

I can remember turning up at a resort or beach somewhere on the island one Sunday, a customer grilled me to make sure that his computer was working again, ready for Monday. (We did sell this stuff to them two to three times the Australian market price and they knew it!)

Communication with the outside world was an event. To make an overseas phone call, you rang the operator and booked your call. This meant she would call you back in the next hour or two to connect your call. You had to be there to take the call or you would miss your turn, and start again. I had many beers in the early evening, staring at the phone, waiting for it to ring, so I could get through to overseas.

The only other way to conduct business overseas was by telex. These were electric typewriters connected via the telephone. They had a priority on the international connections. To operate these, you would first type out your message and this would also produce a paper tape with holes punched into it that would be read into the telex machine, when an international connection was

made.
We didn't have a telex and used a local importer, Roy Gallegher's telex. Never expect a reply on the same day! "I'm off to send a telex", would be the excuse to get out and wander down for a coffee at one of the Café's.
Dining out was a real pleasure. At first, I stuck with steak and chips at the BESA club, I soon gained confidence and spending habits to enjoy the Francophone's idea of a good meal.
The more exotic foods were coconut crabs, flying fox, poulet fish, large snails and local frog legs.
French Bordeaux and Pastis with water at the bar.
It was considered OK to put ice in the Bordeaux red wine, this brought it down to European room temperature.
The restaurants varied from exotic native style thatched huts on small Islands near Pt Vila, to very smart, uniformed waiters, fully air-conditioned palaces.
The French restaurants were just that. Very little English is spoken and always a Maitre De' with loads of flare. My favourite one was out on the airport road at Tebakor. Margaret Rousset knew the two young Frenchmen who ran it, and their snails and frog legs doused in Garlic were delicious.
The French introduced large snails to Efate, these were now in plague proportions. Easy to get, cheap and lovely to eat. Neil Begely once had a community Kiwanis snail day in the city area. School kids picked up the snails from between the shops and offices, parks and vacant land and threw them out onto the road. Slow-driving community-minded Kiwanis then drove over them in their cars.
The Coconut Crabs are very large land crabs with a tail like lobster and one very large claw. These were cooked like a lobster and then prepared in Garlic. The claws and body were eaten. (The tail is not edible.)
Some restaurants used to have these tied up to table legs. This used to scare the daylights out of the tourists who didn't see them when they started to walk past them!
The other delicacy was the Flying Fox. These furry

little bats lived in the Mango trees and ate fruit. Locals used to catch them and sell them to the French Restaurants. It was quite common for a restaurant to have cages, like parrot cages out the back full of live flying foxes. They would take them out to let the tourists stroke them, then serve them! Again doused in a garlic sauce.

The Poulet fish were delicious. These are served whole. They are a reddish colour and have large eves and lovely white flesh. To catch these fish, the locals would go offshore to the deep sea trenches. Set up on their canoes were the back sections of old bicycles, but instead of a wheel on the back, there would be a large spool with about 300 meters of fishing line that they would peddle up to the surface. The Poulet fish lived in that depth of water. Local Poulet fishermen made a reasonable living. It was a popular dish.

A popular tourist trip was on a large sailing trimaran from Pt Vila sea wall around Malapoa Point, to Hideaway Island. (Mele Island) Trigger used to be captain. We would pile on deck, well overloaded, be served wine and beer from the small bar and set off under sail for an hour and half. Hideaway Island was a very small coral Island Resort, about 200 meters from shore. It had a small sandy beach and just off that wonderful coral reefs full of colourful fish to snorkel above. The restaurant was a native-style, village-long hut with beautifully woven bamboo walls and thatched roof. Hamburgers were the specialty, great after a few hours snorkelling.

Trigger, (a small man in his late 50's)would get his boat boys to sail the boat back to Pt Vila while he downed a small bottle of Johnie Walkers. Every trip I took it was the same pattern for Trigger.

A Kiwi family, Dennie and Merryl with their son Mark and daughter Rossie ran the Nautilus Dive trips. I became a regular diver on weekends. The harbour of Pt Vila had many interesting Dive spots. The Star of Russia was a three-masted squared rigged sailing ship, in about 60 ft of water. A complete Flying Boat in about 80-ft of water and deep down a small inter-islander-trading boat at about 150 ft.

We also dived on Mele Reef and some other pretty reefs nearer to the entrance of Pt Vila Harbour.
Nautilus dive people were easy to get on with. Most of the divers on the weekends were locals, as at the weekends the tourists were either leaving or arriving at Pt Vila.
Rossie was about 19, very shapely and had a quiet pleasant personality. She looked great underwater in her bikinis. I had no problem being her dive buddy. She was an excellent diver and taught me a lot. She used to love sitting on any smooth coral we could find on the sea bed and just staying still and let the fish come up to us. Take in the spirit of the place. I soon moved up the experience ladder to dives with decompression. These were deep dives over 100 ft where we would hang onto the boats anchor chain about 10 ft underwater to decompress for 5-10 minutes on the way back up to the surface. Time below and decompression were carefully measured with dive tables. The deep Resolution dive (150ft) only allowed 5 minutes on the bottom with torches and two 10-minute decompression stops at 30 and 10 ft. Extra full air bottles were tied to the anchor chain at these depths. I did this dive with the British Police Commissioner and the British High Commissioner They were after the Resolution's wheel.
I also joined the Pt Vila Dive club and these guys were a bunch of cowboys. They would go out to Banana Bay on the East side of Efate, past Shark Bay, and torch in hand, have a beech dive at night. Banana Bay had a 20-30 ft drop off coral shelf. This coral shelf had lots of channels and narrow caves you could swim through. In places, you had to wriggle vigorously to squeeze through. Or take off your tank and push that through ahead of you still breathing through the mouthpiece. I did this dive once during the day, but never got the guts to try it at night. Lots more big fish and eels about at night. Dive gear was simple, stubbie shorts and an old tee shirt. Weight belt, tank, regulator, and snorkel. Mask and fins. In 30 to 50 ft of water, you could get a good hour out of a tank. It was warm, full of light

down at these depths and colourful reefs and fish abundant.
One of the prize dives in the New Hebrides was the President Coolidge up in Santo. This was a huge USS Troop transport at the entrance of Luganville Harbour on New Hebrides' largest island, Espiritu Santo.
The dive started from the beach, we took extra tanks and swam out about 100 yards to the Coolidge in about 60-ft of water. Great holes were cut into the side of this huge ship where salvage teams had gone in to strip the valuable metals. On the deck were old jeeps, transport trucks and some field guns crusted in coral growth. We swam into the ship through one of the large holes in the side. The water was very clear and visibility was at least 100 ft. we swam through the large freight hold, full of war machinery, into the corridors past small rooms and large halls. There was good light in these places as they had been cut into from the top to salvage stuff. Fish swam around in schools through the ship. Alan Powel was my dive buddy, he was the local Aussie who took people for dives on the Coolidge. I was quite lucky as It was just he and I. He took a small whiteboard slate with him and wrote messages on it while we dived to point out or explain bits of the ship. It certainly was the most fascinating dive in the New Hebrides. Nautilus had set it up for me and I was recommended by them as experienced enough. I didn't get a dive certificate, took the full course, but didn't get to complete the formalities.
I lived in a huge house in Tasariki Park, on a hill over looking the half-mile width of the lagoon where thick jungle met the water's edge. Mangrove roots stretch out into the water. Forest-covered hills in the distance. Tasariki Park was a hillside development that could only have quality homes built on it. Most of the sections were still vacant. The few houses that were built housed the Barclays Bank General Manager, British High Commissioners second in charge, and other owners of Trust companies and Accountancy firms. It was a toffee place. During the day each house had house girls and garden boys keeping the

homes pristine.
My main objective in living in Pt Vila was to save some money. This I tried to do with my visits to restaurants and resorts mostly on the weekends.
I did save, I lived the usual life of a single man, disorganized meals and takeaways from the French bakeries and Pete's Burgers down near the Post Office. I even wrote my name in a good number of library books! I listened to short-wave radio and occasionally went to the Drive Inn. TV, videos, and computer games were of a future era.

Tanna

Tanna is about an hour's flight south of Pt Vila on a small Air Melaneasie Trilander. I had flown in these planes between Jersey and Guernsey in the Channel Islands. They were like cars. Two rows of doors down each side with eight bench seats. Each door would open onto a pair of bench seats. Once you were in, the door closed that was it until you landed and someone outside opened your door!

That evening at the Rossi Hotel when I sat on the end of the jetty with Camilla, she asked if I would like to go down to Tanna for the weekend to stay at Russell Paul's place. Margaret Rousset and Peter were going too.

The airfield at Tanna was really just a grass paddock on the slope of a hill with a considerable rise and dip in the middle of it. The planes always landed going uphill and took off flat out, downhill.

Bob Paul's plantation was the main centre in Tanna. He owned the store and fuel depot. There were a few government buildings and a Burns Philp depot near his homestead.

The Paul's homestead was on the top of a hill overlooking a small half-moon bay. This bay was one of the few sheltered coves on this side of the island.

When we arrived, a small inter-island trader was unloading barrels of fuel onto the beach. This was done by simply throwing the barrels overboard and the local boys hanging on them paddled their dugouts to shore. I helped roll the barrels up the beach to the Land Rover ute.

The Paul's Homestead was a character Queenslander sent out to Tanna as a kit home, years ago. Last year there was a cyclone near Tanna and out the front and back of the house were large steel steaks sticking out of the ground. They lash ropes over the house roof from the front to back steaks to hold the house to the ground in the strong winds.

There was a concrete cookhouse and laundry just outside the back door. This was like a bunker. It was where the Paul's went when the storms got really bad. This was typical of the outer island

homesteads.
Russell was in his early twenties; he had gone to boarding school as a teenager in Australia and then later to university. He came home in the holidays to work the plantation. Back in Tanna again, he was like a reckless teenager, well at home, and wanted to take us everywhere.
Tanna had wild horses and Yasur volcano. There were a few other French plantations on Tanna, but most of Tanna was still wild with scattered primitive villages and village gardens.
Yasur volcano was active the day we went there. As we approached Yasur below we saw a large sandy plain about five miles long and a couple of miles wide. In the centre of it was a shallow lake. Peter and Camilla and I were standing in the back of the ute holding onto the cab roof, Russell Margaret and the other Aussie in the cab. We took off along the sandy plain flat out through the shallow lake directly toward Yasur, bellowing smoke and throwing up lava. The walk up the side of the volcano took about an hour. At the crater rim, (about a quarter of a mile in diameter) the ground was hot. Bits of molten lava rocks scattered all over the place, the strong stench of sulphur stinging our noses. We could climb a small way into the crater between puffs of smoke. one time it cleared enough to stare down into the volcano's throat. Then bang, a sound like huge steel doors falling flat on each other, a hiss, and a plumage of molten lava spurt up into the air. We ran up and jumped back over the rim, laid flat on the hot soil. Hoping not to get hit by the rocks flying over the edge of the crater.
We are but mere mortals and that came home when I peered into the bowels of the earth and listened to it speak this was a tame day.
A few miles further on we came to a beautiful cove. Captain Cook called it Port Resolution, after his ship he beached there to anti foul it. There were hot streams running through the beach sand to the water. We dug holes the size of a bath at the water's edge and sat in the hot pools, under the shade of nearby overhanging coconut palms.
Camilla and I became better friends; it was the

start of a relationship.
Camilla had come to visit Margaret Rousset for three months. She and Margaret had nursed in the same hospital in Brisbane. Camilla was about my height, with dark blonde long hair, brown eyes and shapely.
We became very close over the next two months, I thought I had met my mate for life. I was in a relationship that I took seriously and found it difficult to understand, the times when Camilla would want to be back into the crowd and apart for a while. She wanted no plans, no pressure no certain future. I wanted depth in a relationship and she didn't want to be committed. She had had a number of relationships and saw herself as a helper of men through their life's journeys to their true partners. I thought that this was time for her to settle with the one she had. It was a holiday romance for her that I took much too seriously. I suppose it was a young man's youthful exuberance of life!
There were lighter times when we went out with the crowd and times apart gave space and other experiences.
The Tannese are proud people and are warriors of past days. Most of the villages I saw in Tanna consisted of a main flat area about the size of two tennis courts, surrounded by thatched huts the the shape of larger cowboy tents, with a larger building that served as a meeting house, church or somewhere to get out of the rain. Women in grass skirts had a piece of muddy calico draped over their breasts, attended fires and kids. Pigs and dogs ran throughout the village and men sat in groups on mats chattering way, smoking.
We stopped at a few of these villages to buy watermelons and bananas. I had been told about the John From cargo cult villages, where they placed red crosses at the entrance of their villages, awaiting John From to return with gifts. (This cult started around the time of World War two when Red Cross dropped off supplies.) The John From cargo cult people believed that John From would return. If the missionary could talk about Jesus

return, why not John From. These people's religious day of rest was Monday. We drove past a village with red crosses, but Russell didn't want to stop and call in.

I returned to Tanna again, later in the year with Willie Lop and a Tasmanian school friend Rick Perko. Rick wanted to make money out of tourism and had plans to build a resort on Willie Lop's land at Black Sands beach.

Tanna with Willie as host was earthy. Rick and I saw a lot more of the village life and also understood why the jungle grew so fast and all was green. It rained and rained, Rick got a true experience of tropical downpours.

Rick's rendition of landing and taking off from Tanna Airfield was one of his favourite New Hebridean stories.

Roving Technician

Neil Begely returned from his European holiday, head over heels in love. He had met the lady of his dreams on a bus tour in the UK. She was an Australian solicitor lived in Sydney and got a taste for Perrier water. Not available in Sydney at that time, Neil promptly got Andre Lancon from Burns Philp to send over a dozen bottles.

Neil's lady friend was ecstatic! A dozen bottles of French champagne, Laurent Perrier arrived at her office! This was Neil's dinner party story for weeks. Burns Philp only charged the Perrier water price.

I had turned 24, still in a relationship with Camilla, and now, sharing the Tasariki house with Neil.

Noumea NCR had installed a number of new computers and needed me over there to keep things going as some of the French technicians were away. I spent the next 5 months moving between Noumea and Pt Vila. Some weeks I would be in Noumea for four working days, then back to Pt Vila to do repairs through the weekend, only to return to Noumea on Monday. It was a 2-hour flight on the UTA Fokker Friendship between the two cities.

Camilla seemed happier with this arrangement, she had her freedom and I looked forward to my returns to Pt Vila.

Just before Camilla was to leave New Hebrides to return to Australia, she came down to Noumea to stay with me for a couple of weeks. I had an apartment near the Chateau Royalle on Anse Vata beach.

I would work the days and spend the lunch times on the beach with Camilla. In the evenings we would sample the Norman nightlife, disco's, and Café's. Bill and Carol Saville (The Australian programmer at NCR) invited us around for dinner, I felt we were moulding into a couple.

On the weekends we would drive to the northern part of New Caledonia, to Bourail, across the mountain pass to the other side of New Caledonia to Heingen.

To get there the roads were coral and one river had

a car ferry that seemed to take ages to pick us up and even longer to get across a 200-metre river. The resort was idyllic and a lot likes plantation beeches in the New Hebrides.

Le Squash had become another favourite water hole in Noumea. It was run and owned by Bob Fisher and his brother. Bob had managed NCR in Woolingong, south of Sydney, now living a more sedate life running a bar in Noumea.

Camilla and I returned to Pt Vila and soon afterwards, she returned to Brisbane to find work. We corresponded, and I had hoped to shift to Brisbane to live with her.

I returned for a month-long stint in Noumea that included Christmas. I had met a Japanese girl, Chezuka in Pt Vila and met up with her again soon after arriving in Noumea.

She was about 20, her father owned a Japanese importing business in Sydney and they had moved there from Japan about 10 years earlier. Chezuka was fluent in her native Japanese, spoke Australian and studied French at Uni level. She started working in a jewellery store in the main part of Noumea, near the Café de Paris. Pierre Huron and family were away for a month on leave to Australia. I was living in his house. Chezuka shifted in with me. I would take her to work on my way to NCR in the mornings and we would meet after work and go off to a cafe or wherever. She stayed with me a few weeks and then shifted into a flat with a Frenchman she met who worked at one of the hotels. We got on well and spent a few evenings together.

Paul Shirley (the Kiwi programmer at SG Bank) had a 28ft yacht. He and his wife Catherine, were keen divers. Catherine was very pregnant and Paul wanted me to go out scuba diving off his yacht near the small islands off Anse Vata. He believed that you could find the colourful, large tropical crayfish out there.

Off we went one Saturday. It was the first time I had sailed on a 28ft mono hull yacht. I was to use Catherine's dive gear and had to wear her wet suit. Catherine, when not pregnant, was about my height, but a slim, very shapely French woman. I

put on this wet suit and could only raise my arms to shoulder level. The French dive tanks had J valves on them. What this meant, is, that the tank would let out air until it was a certain pressure, (near empty) them you pull on the valve lever and the escaping pressure is dropped so you can get about 5 minutes air out of it. This was the way you knew your tank was near empty. No air pressure gauge on these tanks to let you know how much air is left.
So down Paul and I went. Paul determined to get a cray. Visibility was poor, the weather cloudy, sea choppy and I was silly enough to dive with Paul Shirley. About 200 yards from the boat, we decided it was not a good place to be. We started to go back to the boat. I was following Paul as I could not see a way to the boat anchor chain. Paul enthusiastic as he always was, swam off to where he thought the anchor was. I followed behind and couldn't keep up. The wet suit only allowed me to kick my legs to get along. Paul disappeared into the murky distance and the air in the tank dried up. I pulled on the J valve lever to get the extra 5 minutes of air. The lever was already pulled down. That was it. No more air. I was in about 30 ft of water, and swam to the surface. I was about 50 yards from the boat. I didn't have a buoyancy compensator on, so I had no way of floating. I put in my snorkel a tried to swim in the choppy sea. It was terrible, the wetsuit restricting me, the dive gear trying to sink me and seawater filling my snorkel. Paul was down below ahead of me oblivious to my plight and me.
I somehow got to the boat. Paul came up from somewhere ahead of the boat. He swam past the anchor chain and found it when he retraced his route. I was completely stuffed, very angry, and should have ditched Catherine's dive gear for Paul to recover. The weather came up; the boat motor wouldn't start, so we sailed back to the Yacht club in rough seas and a stiff breeze.
Lesson learnt,
Stuff the crays, and don't use other people's dive gear without checking it out first and stay on land with Paul Shirley!
Margaret and I went out when I was in Pt Vila,

and we would meet for morning coffees at cafes.
She had decided to go to Brisbane, flat with Camilla and go to university. Joe Ernst life changed when the Magees came into town. The Magees were Kiwi's and came over to run a dairy/beef plantation. Two daughters and two sons were let loose on the local nightlife and made an impact. Joe eventually married one of the daughters. I think Joe and Camilla had something going on during my visits to Noumea.
Neil Begely married his solicitor and moved on to the Solomon Islands to manage NCR there.
Willie Lop, left NCR soon after Neil shifted to the Solomons. He didn't want to work for a new Masta. He had various small businesses in Pt Vila and Tanna, and as always, remained a lively character in Pt Vila.
Independence came and Vanuatu emerged, New Hebrideans became Ni Vanuatu and Bishlama, French and English, all three became the official language.
I did return to Brisbane, and stayed a short while with Camilla and Margaret. I bought a sporty Mini Moke and I spent some time driving to Bribie Island, where Roy Ernst was holidaying with his old Coobulture friends. Then up north to Tin Can Bay and Rainbow Beach.
Friendships that develop into relationships with one partner wanting much more from it than the other, drags on in indecisiveness. I could finally see that this was where we were.
We parted friends.
Ricky Perko had been visiting his uncle in Surfers, I gave the Moke to Camilla and took a lift with Ricky back to Tassie. Arrived home in early February 1980.
Christchurch, Summer 2000
I roamed through the corridors of my mind.
Looking through doors 20 years old..
Some opened wide and others I didn't recognize anymore.
Some I did recognise and walked past.

Part Four- Red Centre

The Alice

It was a long drive from Brisbane down to Melbourne. Ricky, hadn't sorted out a job with his uncle the bookmaker, and I was feeling sorry for myself, after breaking up with Camilla.
Tasmania, became a place to return to out of habit. Friends and family seemed to be second place to the emptiness I felt. I couldn't get back to work at NCR. (I suppose I had left once too often!) I was told there was a job in Alice Springs, it had been vacant for nearly a year now. I saw this as a nice way of saying that I'd come to the end of the road.
I stayed with Rob Oates, and Dirk for a while, then fronted up to the Hobart post office, armed with dollars worth of 20-cent pieces, and dialed NCR Adelaide. The job was still there in Alice; I had to get to Adelaide for an interview and briefing early the next week, if I wanted it.
After 2 days in Adelaide, I arrived in the Alice. I didn't know what to expect and really didn't take a lot of interest in the idea of living in the middle of Australia.
The flight up from Adelaide, covered miles and miles of brown and red, a few crumbly mountains ranges and then more flat.
Landing at Alice, I could see the long McDonnald ranges, dots of green, and more mountain ranges in the distance. The red and blues of the landscape, the warm blast of air as I stepped onto the tarmac, brightened my whole outlook.
The bus trip into Alice from the airport took me past huge river gums at the side of a river of sand. Through a Gap in the ranges into the township of Alice. It wasn't as large as I expected; (about 11,000 people) the suburban houses were dusty and small prefab places. The centre of town was one street, with shops on both sides and a church in the middle with a huge old-style veranda house behind it. I stayed in the Telford Hotel a few days. The NCR office was a room in a bus depot, and I had the centre flat in a group of 3 ground-level flats at Arunga Street, near the Gap I entered into Alice.
At the bus depot, there was a Holden panel van. The

office was small, with a desk and workbench, telephone and a cupboard full of assorted spare parts.
My flat was a two-bedroom place with a kitchen, and living room, and out the front the roof went out about 10 ft, to give a nice shaded area. It was furnished of sorts. Nearby was a supermarket, called Piggly Wiggly's. Outside it sat aborigines in filthy clothes Down the end of my street were some vacant blocks of land, with some aborigines sitting in the dust in a circle, drinking booze.
The front flat had a girl from Melbourne, Sandy a teacher, who smiled and said hello. I'm sure she could see I was stunned at where I had ended up. The flat at the other side had a couple of blokes from Adelaide, in their late twenties, who seemed to want to stay to themselves. Fine!
I spent the first few days, driving around the streets of Alice, and found out it was much larger than it first appears. I dropped into most of the places that had NCR equipment, they all seemed nice people, and even pleased to see someone was up here permanently. The main river, the Todd, was bone, dry, and just golden sand with huge river gums growing in and along it. The River was the home of many groups of grubby, flagon-drinking aborigines. The main street had its Aborigines sitting about, with glazed eyes, not seeming to see anything or anyone.
There were a number of Hotels and bars. I got to know them all. Not only for a drink but the cash registers in them were thrashed and worked very hard.
I bumped into Nick Bedford, only a few days after arriving. He was from Adelaide, looking for somewhere to live. He shifted in and got a job cleaning pools. We got on well; he had a very confident attitude to life and lived and played hard. He had a 5-year-old daughter in Adelaide and troubles, so like a lot of people I met from Adelaide, had headed north for a break. Nick got into the Alice social scene and would go down to Adelaide to bring back a kilo of dope and deal it through the town. It wasn't really dealing, just helping out friends. His younger mate, Mark, a

cook came up to work at the Telford. (There was no problem getting a job, as a lot of people passed through only staying a few months)
I couldn't keep up with Nick's pace, and I suppose I didn't really want to late night at disco, most nights of the week. The people from Adelaide called parties, "shows". So there was always a show on somewhere on the weekends. I finished up at some houses on the outskirts of Alice I didn't know about.
I joined the local skydiving club. We would Jump early in the morning when there was little breeze. Alice Springs is about 2000 ft above sea level, but with the warm ground, thermals are strong and it takes some time for a parachute to come down. I got to jump at 6,000 ft above ground. That's a 7-second free fall down to 2,000 ft above ground, then wham! The shute is opened. Gliding down to earth, with the expanse of the desert to the south and the length of the McDonald Ranges to the north is a beautiful way to start the morning. I jumped using the club's old round army parachutes. Some of the members had colourful square shutes and bright diving gear. They would plan maneuvers on the ground and link up as they free-fall to earth. I enjoyed drifting down with the parachute opened, more than the free fall.
My last jump was a near disaster. My leg was tangled in the riser strings to the shute from my body harness, this meant that although the shute was open, I was pulling on one side causing a spiral motion. I head towards the ground like riding down a corkscrew. About 50 ft above the ground, I finally untangled and straightened up, just to see a land cruiser pass under my feet. I landed on the road. (Had I not untangled, I would have landed on my back, or could have been hit by the Landcruiser as they were not expecting someone to drop out of the sky in front of them!)
Mum and Dad came up for 2 weeks and they too got a tour of the place. They liked the warmth of Alice. Between the coldest time at night and the warmest of the day, there is about 20 degrees difference. So in the winter it would freeze at night

and you could get sunburnt during the day. A great climate! I took them along the Gaps and down to Ayers Rock. Dad bought a book written by the owner of the camel farm and got right into the place.
I had arrived in the Alice, just before the developers had got hold of her. The open-air cinema was still operating, the Connelliam Airways small airport to the west of Alice still had small planes buzzing in and out of it. The Hotels were a ramshackle collection of add-ons to the original hotels. The Telford and Stuart Arms had a sort of open beer garden out the back, and the Drive-In, just outside the Gap showed films every night of the week. The Motels in Alice were not too flashy, some had restaurants, and some had simple cabin accommodations. The railway station was in the middle of town, and people came to check out who was coming off the train and pick up their freight. The businesses and shops were mainly locally owned. There was a Coles supermarket. Alice had a feel of the outback, where things were still a bit wild.
Aussie rules football was the sport of Alice. There were four football clubs, East's, Westies, Central and some other imaginative club names. Each had their own club and bar. Westies Club was across the road from the High School. It was the after-school bar for the teachers. (Most of the teachers were graduates from Adelaide Teachers College).
I met Frank Green, KC and Emal.
Nick moved back to Adelaide for a while and Frank shifted in.
Wendy and George from Kingston were travelling through Alice. They stayed for about 3 months. I got George a job at the Telford as security and barman, and Wendy got a job as a Coles mole. I enjoyed their company and the free beers at the Telford.
Emal bought a puppy to show Frank. It was thin and brown and Emal said it had a small dick. Frank told him it was a female. Emal didn't like that and left the puppy at our place. The puppy grew into a small brown dog called, "Scrappy". Scrappy lived outside under an old couch. It was one of

those dogs that bend sideways and cower when called for it or bring it food. Scrappy had puppies under the couch. We gave them away, and soon after Scrappy went to live with the Aborigines down the road in the vacant paddocks. We used to see her occasionally, but she never returned to the flat after living there for nearly a year. Frank always reckoned it was a coon dog.

After about 9 months in Alice, I took a week off and flew to Cairns. I wanted to see the sea and the tropics. I snorkelled on the Barrier Reef and took a bus tour to beaches north of Cairns. On the way back the bus broke down. We stopped outside a roadhouse. Parked in front of the road hose were Neil Begely and his new wife (from Pt Vila) they were travelling back to Cairns from the beaches we had just visited on their honeymoon. (Later that night in a Cairns pub I met Barry and Andre from the BP Port Vila Cricket team I used to play with, small world!)

I stopped in Brisbane for a couple of nights on the way back. I stayed a night with Camilla, things had moved on. Camilla was soon to move to the outback Queensland to live with her school teacher friend. Arne and Hanneke had moved to the Gold Coast, so I dropped in to see them. I nearly bought a house there.

Alice was starting on its developments, the Casino was being built, new Hotels were popping up, and a shopping centre west of the main street opened.

My sister Janet and Gerard arrived in their camper van and parked in front of the flat. Then they travelled up north, to come back to the Alice on their way south.

Sandy next door, had some friends, Volker and Heather from Melbourne come to visit. I got to become very friendly with them, and we spent a number of weekends out along the Ranges camping in swags. I also got on well with an older couple that had been teachers in Alice for some years. He was a very keen 4 Wheel Drive man and took us to some remote places east of Alice. We went to old mine shafts and gorges with rubies. We would

travel with 3 or 4 vehicles, and an old AM radio transceiver and listen to the cockatoo hour, when outback stations would call in on each other and check out the latest gossip.

I enjoyed walking in the ranges near Alice and got to know a lot of the tracks up the crumbling mountains. I also bought KC's Yamaha 400-cc trail bike. This was an open country for trail bikes, you could get to any place, as there were very few fences, and the riverbeds were always dry. I rode for miles around the tracks and along sandy riverbeds near Alice. I even came across some wild camels one day.

The flat at times, filled with people. At one time, Frank had one bedroom, and I had the other. Nick had closed in the front open area under the roof with shade cloth walls and with living there with his nurse girlfriend. Mark was out of work and put a bed in the living room and Jenny Agnew (an Irish lady slept on the floor for a couple of weeks). I used to come home to a full flat; the problem was that it was turning into a place for dope heads to drop in. Nick was dealing. Frank and I got sick of it. No way were we going to lose our careers over someone else dealing out of our house. One night I came home and people were sniffing coke off my coffee table. I went berserk and kicked them out, The flat returned to just Frank and me again. (I think I was a soft touch, as I only wanted people in the flat to contribute to the food, as NCR was paying the rent)

With the developers and big plans for Alice came more sophisticated ledger machines, bank cheque sorters and computers. I had more immediate pressure with these, to keep them operating. I got a new car, an Escort station wagon, and had a few NCR sales reps come through. Alice was on the map now, as far as NCR was concerned.

Terry, a technician from Adelaide came up with some urgent computer spare parts and test gear. We went to the Telford for a drink after work to the sunset bar, upstairs. There were only the two of us, and a lady walked in for a drink. I walked over and chatted with her and asked her to come out on the balcony with us for a drink, and she did.

Photos

1) Mum and I at Elbow Road Laren Holland just prior to leaving Holland for Australia 1956

2) My first steps of my journey onboard the immigrant ship to Australia

3) Janet and me Clara Street back yard

4) Last year Ulverstone High School aged 15

5) On the way to Alice Springs

6) First day back home in Tassie from Europe

7) Sue, my companion, wife, who shares my journey in book "Shared Journey's"

NCR

TECHNICIAN'S IDENTIFICATION CARD

This certifies that MR. J. van GARDEREN is a technician in the employ of this Company and is authorized to call upon our users for the purpose of giving Technical Service. He is also authorized to collect repair charges.

Height	Weight	Eyes	Hair
5'6"	10st2	Blue	Brown

VOID AFTER 31/3/1974

Signature of Technician

DECONPORT

Location